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S E R M O N S

PREACH'D at the

Cathedral-Church

O F

W I N C H E S T E R.

B Y

ABRAHAM MARKLAND, D.D.

Late PREBENDARY of the said Church,
and MASTER of *St. Cross*.

In Two VOLUMES.

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SERMON I.

M A T T. xiii. 3.

*And he spake many Things unto them
in Parables.*



INTENDING, as I have Opportunity, to discourse on some of the Parables of our Saviour, I shall first, by way of Preface, endeavour to shew you the great Usefulness of this Kind of Instruction, this Way of Preaching by Parables ; and, not to multiply Particulars, I shall only offer these three Considerations :

I. THAT such familiar Allusions or Parables are easily understood.

II. ARE easily remember'd. And,

III. ARE easily applied.

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AND

AND that sort of Preaching that has all these Properties, will, I suppose, be allow'd to be very useful and instructive.

I. I BEGIN with the First. That such familiar Allusions or Parables are easily understood.

THEY are usually taken from Things that are obvious to common Sense, and of daily Experience.

As that of the rich Man, that fared deliciously, and the poor Beggar at his Gate, that lay starving with Hunger. A Parable that we daily see fulfilled in our Streets; where the Rich are feasting and revelling to Excess, and the Poor at their Doors, and the poorer, and more modest, at home in their Houses are dying with Hunger, and would be glad of the Crumbs that fall from their Tables. And that of the other rich Man, that, having gather'd Abundance for many Years, bid his Soul take her Ease, eat, drink, and be merry, and that very Night was deprived of his Soul, and of all his Possessions. A Parable too, that we often see verif'd: Men, either disappointed of their Hopes and Expectations, or worse, snatched away, and hurried to the Place
of

of Weeping and Wailing, in the Midst of their Mirth, and the Height of their Pleasures.

I SHALL mention but one more : That of the ungrateful and unmerciful Servant ; who, when his Lord had forgiven him ten thousand Talents, took his poor Fellow-Servant, that ow'd him an hundred Pence, and caught him by the Throat, and cast him into Prison. What Discourse in the World could better describe the Sin of Ingratitude, or the Danger of a cruel and uncharitable Disposition ? What Arguments or Reasons can be invented so powerful, or so plain and so easy, as this single Parable ? He that runs may read ; and he that reads cannot choose but understand.

If it be thought an Objection to this, that the Disciples ask our Saviour, Why he spoke to the People in Parables ? our Saviour has answered it himself ; Because they were obstinate ; and, though they saw, yet they did not perceive ; not because they could not, but would not understand. And to those who are unwilling, and have no mind to be informed, the plainest Instructions are all dark Speeches, hard Sentences, and Parables.

It is true, indeed, there are some of the Parables of our Saviour, that related to the Progress and Success of the Gospel, or the Destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*, not so easy to be understood: But then it is to be consider'd, that those were not Parables so much as Predictions, or Prophecies expressed after the Manner of Parables. And it is usual, and natural, and often (too) necessary, that such Things should be deliver'd obscurely, and not in plain Terms, but in Figures and Allusions. And yet even those too, were not always so difficult, but the *Jews* understood them. As appears by the Parable of a certain Man, who planted a Vineyard, and let it out to Husbandmen; and first sent his Servants, and afterwards his Son; all whom they took and slew, and seized the Inheritance. It is said in the Conclusion, that the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* perceived he had spoken that Parable against them; and would have laid hold on him, but for Fear of the People; and that very Hour would have fulfilled his Parable; which yet in due Time, and in more proper Circumstances they did afterwards execute.

BESIDES, we may observe, that our Saviour introduces or concludes his Parables with

SERMON I.

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with some remarkable Sentence, which may serve as a Key to let us into the Meaning, or as a Clew to lead us through the whole Parable. After, all it is certain, whatever may be objected, that our blessed Saviour would never have used this kind of Instruction, had he thought it unintelligible; and he who spake so as no Man spake, would never speak so as no Man could understand.

OR if there were any Thing in any of his Parables, that was hard and difficult, he was always ready to explain the Meaning, and his Hearers at any Time might have known it for asking. He was never hard of Access, and in no wise refused any Man that came to be taught and instructed. And though *Nicodemus*, one of the chief Pharisees, came to him by Night, yet he would have resolved his Questions, had he come to him by Day, and said nothing in secret, but what he would have spoken as freely in the Temple.

BUT I need not multiply Arguments in a Matter so evident.

I PROCEED therefore to the second Consideration:

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THAT,

should not murmur, as they also murmured; that we should not, as they also, be destroy'd of the Destroyer.

III. But, Thirdly, As such familiar Allusions or Parables are easily understood, and are easily remember'd, so are they easily applied; and I doubt not (for Instance) but the Parable now mentioned, has been applied already.

LET but any one read over the Parables of our Saviour, and see if this be not true: As that of the Talents; where the unprofitable Servant, for hiding his in a Napkin, is cast into outer Darknes. Can any Man read this, that is conscious to himself what an idle Life he leads; how little he has improved either the Grace of God, or the Gifts of Nature; how much he might have benefited both others and himself, had he been careful and diligent; and not tremble to think what will become of him for his Sloth and Laziness? As, on the contrary, he who is conscious and sensible of his honest and hearty Endeavours, of employing the Gifts of God to his Glory, and the Good of Mankind; and though perhaps he received but one Talent, was thankful, and contented, and faithful in that little, and careful to improve it to his utmost Ability,

Ability, may he not chearfully hope, and comfortably expect, he shall enter at last into the Joy of his Lord? And so that Parable of the good *Samaritan*, who seeing a poor Traveller left naked and wounded by inhuman Thieves, and by almost as inhuman a Priest and Levite pass'd by and neglected, had Pity on him, and went to him, and bound up his Wounds, and sat him on his Beast, and carried him to an Inn, and took Care of him. Who can read this, and not choose, but commend this pious *Samaritan*, and apply the Case, and say to himself, (if our Lord had not said it,) *Go thou, and do likewise?* I shall name but one more, and that is the Parable of the ten Virgins; though for five that are wise, I doubt there are five Times five that are foolish. While the Bridegroom tarried, and they all slumber'd and slept, (the Foolish slept, and even the Wise too slumber'd,) there was a Cry at Midnight, the Bridegroom cometh, and the Wise trim'd their Lamps, and straightway met him, and went into the Marriage: But the foolish Virgins awaken'd in a Fright, and their Lamps quite gone out, and no Oil in their Vessels, like Men scarce well awake, and not knowing what they did, at first would have borrowed, and then went to buy: But whilst they were gone on so foolish an Errand,
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the Door was shut, and they for ever excluded; and all their Arguings, and all their Entreatings, and all their Prayers and Tears, could not get them Admittance. Who can read this, and not infer, and conclude, and make the same Application, with our Blessed Saviour? *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the Day nor the Hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.* Who does not see, and who does not tremble at the infinite Danger of a late, hasty, and hurried Repentance? I might instance in more, but these are sufficient to shew, that our Saviour's, and all wise Parables, (and his were all very wise,) are easily applicable. There is so much of Guilt, or so much of Envy in most Part of Mankind, that it is a very hard Matter to propose a Parable, but they shall presently apply it to themselves, or to others. It is a Glass, or a Mirror, that shews all Men their Faces, both the Good and the Bad, the Spots and Wrinkles, the fair Colours and Beauties; and Men know themselves so well too, they quickly perceive whether it makes them either worse or better than they are, or whether it abuses or flatters; And though, as St. James says, *A Man presently forgets his own Face in a Glass,* yet he is so well acquainted with his Features and Complexion, that he knows his
Face

SERMON I. 11

Face at any Time when he sees it, and need not be told who he is, or what Manner of Person.

AND thus I have endeavour'd to shew you the Usefulness of this antient Way of instructing by Parables; as that they are easily understood, are easily remember'd, and are easily apply'd.

INSTEAD of entering on any Parable at present, I shall make some Inferences from these Particulars, which may serve to direct our Judgment in hearing of Sermons, and such like pious Discourses; what we should most affect, and what are most edifying.

AND they are certainly in the first Place, such as are plain, and easy to be understood. And for this, we have the Authority of one of the best Preachers in the World, next our Saviour, and that is St. *Paul* the Apostle, who though he was of All the most learned and eloquent, and though he spake with more Tongues than any, yet declares, that in the Church he had rather speak five Words with his Understanding, than so he might teach others, than ten thousand Words in an unknown Tongue, or to speak in a Tongue, though
never

never so common, is all one, if the Sense be obscure and unintelligible. It is a Wonder indeed, how any Men should delight in hearing Things abstruse and difficult, which they cannot apprehend without knitting their Brows, and bending their Foreheads, without a close and severe Intention of Mind, of which very few too are capable. Would he be thought a wise Son, or believ'd to be hungry, that instead of Bread should ask a Stone of his Father? As it is in our natural, so is it also in our spiritual Food and Nourishment; that is usually most wholesome, that is plain and simple, and of easy Digestion. And yet there are People of so deprav'd a Taste, and so vicious an Appetite, that nothing will down with them but only subtle and intricate Notions, and plain common Sense is despis'd. And yet all our Actions are easy and common; and there is nothing more plain than the Life of a Christian. Nor do I at all question, but a Man may more easily believe and be saved, than read over the numerous and tedious Volumes, (much more understand them,) that have been written about Faith and Justification. Can any Thing be plainer than the excellent Sermon of our Saviour on the Mount? Hard indeed to be practis'd, but not one Precept, but at very first hearing is easily under-

understood. Were Men but intent and resolv'd on their Duty, they would choose and desire to have it express'd and told them in plain Terms, and not mix'd and involv'd with curious Notions and nice Speculations, that not only disturb, but divert their Minds from the main of their Duty; like the subtle Traditions of those antient Casuists and School-Divines of the Jews, their Scribes and Pharisees, that voided the Law, and made it of little or no Force and Effect: And yet there are Men whose Heads are fill'd with abstracted Notions, and can talk whole Hours and Days together; and when they have done, (if there be any End of such empty Disputes,) are just where they began, and never the wiser, and never the better; and therefore laying aside all vain Affectation of unprofitable Questions and Opposition of Science, falsely so call'd, a Knowledge that puffs up, rather than edifies, let us seek, and desire the sincere Word of God, that is able to build us up, not only in the Faith, but in the real Practice of our holy Religion. And besides the Advantage of plain Discourses, that they are easily understood, they are easily remember'd; for it is not only difficult, but almost impossible to remember a Discourse which we scarce understood. We may retain, perhaps, a confused

fed Notion of what we have heard, but it is soon lost, and quickly forgotten.

THE next Inference I shall make from this Way of instructing and teaching by Parables, is, that we should prefer such kind of Discourses, as are most easily remember'd: And those are not only such as are plain and easy in themselves, but distinct and methodical.

THERE is a Way (that is mightily taking with the present Age) of soft, easy, and gentle Discourses, that flow smooth, without any Disturbance, without any Stops of pedantick Quotations, without any Breaks of Heads or Divisions; and strangely it pleases and diverts such People as come only to hear for their Pleasure and Diversion. But 'tis almost impossible, that any Thing of this should be retained or remember'd: It may serve for the present, and abundantly satisfy, and give Content, and may raise Delight, and, perhaps, Admiration; and even the most observing, judicious, and critical, cannot find the least Fault, either in Thought or Expression, all just and proper, and great and noble: And, perhaps, some few of better Capacity may perceive the Connexion; and though finely spun, and curiously wrought, may discern too the
Thread

Thread of the whole Discourse: But all this is perfectly lost and thrown away on the Generality; and to those who have most Need of Instruction, and most Desire and Mind to be instructed, it is all Amusement, and little they understand, and less they remember. It is an old Observation, and (with the Leave of the present, or the coming Age,) never the worse for being old or antient, that Mankind is apt to run into Extreame. And thus because our honest Forefathers were perhaps too nice, and a little too minute, in dividing a Text or Portion of Scripture, and raising more Heads and Parts than they needed; those that come after, out of the Abundance of their Wisdom, or perhaps out of Pride, and a Spirit of Contradiction, will have no Heads at all, no Parts or Divisions; and a Text once named, it is dropp'd, and we hear no more of it after; entertain'd with a free and loose kind of Essay, where often the first might be last, and the last might be first; and like the Text, the Discourse is soon lost and forgotten. Now this is certainly an Error, and perhaps a greater on the other Extream. And because we are speaking of Parables, give me leave to illustrate this Matter by a plain and familiar Allusion: Suppose a Man were designing a Journey, and were told of two Ways;

one

one rough and uneasy, through Lanes and Fields, and little Enclosures; the other a great deal more airy and pleasant, through a fair, large, and open Country, without any Manner of Bounds or Fences, without a Shrub or a Tree to hinder the Prospect, but soft and smooth, and all Carpet Way, and wondrous easy, and strangely delightful. Now if he really intended his Journey, he would take the first Way, and leave the other to those who intended nothing but taking the Air, and riding out for their Pleasure.

WERE Men indeed more desirous to consider, and retain what they hear, than 'tis much to be fear'd they too usually are, yet they could make but little of general Discourses, without any Partitions and Rests to the Memory.

I HAVE touch'd upon a nice and tender Subject, yet cannot imagine that it needs Excuse, if it be not taken by Halves in either Extream, and quite understood. However, I shall close it with another wise and old Observation; That Mankind was always given to Change, never knows when it is well; soon tired, and weary with the best State of Things; and whether it prove for the better or the worse, it loves to be altering,

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altering, and is fond of Variety. And yet there is certainly some Rule or Standard to judge of these Matters: And as all Men acknowledge that in the *Augustan* Age, the *Roman* Learning and Eloquence were at their Height and Perfection; so, might I be permitted to assign a Time, when good useful Preaching was at the Height in this Church, (and perhaps any other,) I should choose the latter Part of the last Century. I may be mistaken; but I should think the Church happy, had she always as good; and yet may she have every Day better and better Instructors.

THE last Inference I shall make from this antient Way of teaching by Parables, is, that we should prefer and desire to hear such kind of Discourses, as are of Use to ourselves, as concern our own Case, such as come home to us, and are close and applicable. There are many Things Men are fond, or at least, are patient of hearing, as some nice Speculations, because they give them no manner of Disturbance; and they can hear them, and be never the worse, that is, never the better, no Way concerned, or at all moved and affected.

BUT were Men in earnest, and desirous of knowing and mending their Faults, and of knowing and doing their Duty, they would spare this, and be glad of something more to their Purpose; something they might apply, or could hardly avoid applying to their own Case and Concern; and not only just told them, and barely laid down in a doctrinal Way, but press'd and urg'd upon them, with some Zeal and Affection, with the good old Way, of some warm and passionate (though too much neglected and diffus'd) Application.

I SHALL conclude this Discourse of the Knowledge and Benefit of teaching by Parables, with that excellent Parable of *Nathan* the Prophet, who being sent from God to reprove *David* for killing *Uriah*, and taking his Wife, came and told him this Story, so wisely contriv'd, and so moving and affecting, as, though very well known, I cannot choose but relate: *There were two Men, (says he,) in one City, the one rich, and the other poor: The rich Man had exceeding many Flocks and Herds; but the poor Man had nothing, save one little Ewe-Lamb which he had bought and nourish'd, and it grew up together with him, and*
with

with his Children: It did eat of his own Meat, and drank of his own Cup, and lay in his Bosom, and was unto him as a Daughter. And there came a Traveller to the rich Man, and he spared to take of his own Flock, and of his own Herd, to dress for the Way-faring Man, but took the poor Man's Lamb, and dress'd it for the Man that was come to him. And David's Anger was kindled, and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the Man that has done this Thing shall surely die, and he shall restore the Lamb Fourfold: At which the Prophet made him this short and close Application, *Thou art the Man.* What Discourse could he have offer'd to David, either on the sixth and seventh Commandment, *Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit Adultery,* that could have smote him to the Heart like this Story or Parable? He could not have made him more startle and tremble, had he rais'd the very Spirit, or shewn him the Ghost of the murder'd Uriah. This was the Subject, and this the Occasion of his many pious and penitential Psalms, which he has left to the Church for the Use and the Comfort of all great Sinners, and of all great Penitents. As great Sinners every Age and Nation, I fear, has produc'd, but never any a greater, or so great a Penitent.

May we consider what has been said, and God give us a right Understanding in all Things. And that for Christ Jesus's sake; to whom, with the Father, and the Blessed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever.



SERMON



SERMON II.

M A T T. xxv. 14, 15.

For the Kingdom of Heaven is as a Man travelling into a far Country, who called his Servants, and delivered unto them his Goods.

And unto one he gave five Talents, to another two, and to another one; to every Man according to his several Abilities, and straightway took his Journey.



YOU may possibly remember, that I have proposed to discourse on some of the Parables of our Saviour: And, in a general Preface, have endeavoured to shew the great Use and Advantage of this antient Way of Instructing by Parables. And that chiefly, from these three Considerations.

I. THAT such familiar Allusions, or Parables, are easily understood.

II. ARE easily remembered. And

III. ARE easily applied.

AND that sort of Instruction, that has all these Properties, cannot be denied to be very useful and edifying.

THUS far by Way of Preface. I now proceed : And, though I shall not presume to make any Comparison between the Parables of our Saviour, or prefer one to another, or say which is the best, when they are all of them excellent ; yet since I cannot expect either Life or Opportunity to go through them all, and in so very good a Choice, there can be no choosing amiss, I shall begin with this of the Talents ; which puts us in Mind of the strict and severe Account we must render of all the Gifts and Graces of God Almighty.

It is said indeed in the Parable here, that after a long Time the Lord came and reckon'd with these Servants. And it is true he has stay'd a long Time with many, with many of us here present, and much longer than

than we deserved : And yet it is as true, that he has called many others long since, to an Account ; and what Account they have given is only known to themselves and God Almighty. If faithful and diligent, they are happy beyond Expression ; if slothful and wicked, they are inexpressibly miserable, cast into outer Darkness, with the unprofitable Servant, and there to lie weeping and wailing to Eternity.

IN speaking to this Parable, I shall not, as is usual, and a very good Method too, first consider the Circumstances apart by themselves ; but shall rather discourse on the chief Heads of the Parable, and, as I go along, shall take in the Circumstances which will both enlighten and enliven the Discourse ; and make it less tedious, and no less instructive, and more like a Parable.

Now the chief Heads of this Parable seem to be these :

I. THAT God has given Men several Talents.

II. THAT he will call them to Account for the Use of these Talents.

III. THAT those, who have used them well shall be graciously rewarded, and those who have used them ill, shall severely be punished. There may be other Particulars, but to these, I conceive, they may all be reduced.

I. I BEGIN with the First. That God has given Men several Talents. By Talents we may understand either the Gifts of Nature, which are the Gifts too of God, or the Gifts and Graces of his Holy Spirit. Now these, it is plain, that God has distributed in divers Manners, and in different Proportions, not only to single Persons, but to whole Ages and Nations. Some Ages have been dark, and stupid, and ignorant ; and others as curious, inquisitive, and intelligent. Some over-run with Blindness, and Superstition, and ready to believe every Thing ; others as sceptical, doubting, disputing, and denying first Principles, and believing little or nothing. And as Ages, so Nations : Some sitting in Darkness and the Shadow of Death ; others enjoying the Light of the Gospel : And, of these some in less, and some in greater Degrees of Perfection. And, as Ages and Nations ; so particular Persons : Some endow'd with great Parts and Abilities, of a clear Judgment,

ment, and a quick Apprehension; and others of as heavy and a slow Understanding: Some of vast and large, others of little and narrow Capacities. And, as *Moses* acknowledged and complain'd of himself, that he was not eloquent, some flow of Speech and hard of Utterance; and others as ready, of a fluent Tongue, and a voluble Eloquence. And thus, as in Statures, so in the Mind of Men, there are different Proportions. Some are large of Soul, and almost exalted beyond the Rate of Mankind; and others as depressed, and very little of Thought, and of low Understandings.

BUT what is stranger yet, and more to our Purpose; some born of excellent Tempers, of towardly Dispositions, and virtuous Inclinations; and some of as strong and obstinate Aversions, of perverse, untoward, and vicious Constitutions: And to bring them to any Thing of Good and Virtuous, by soft and gentle, or severe and harsh Methods, is almost as difficult, as to change their Natures; to give them new Dispositions, and new Inclinations. And thus, *as the Wind bloweth whither it listeth, and we hear the Sound, but know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth*; so are the Gifts of God's Holy Spirit; and the various and wonderful Dispensations of Providence: And the same Persons, with
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the same Advantages, and the same Opportunities of a like good Education, shall differ exceedingly ; and some be Profligates, and some excellent Men, and excellent Christians : And in the same House and the same Family, some Vessels of Wrath, and some Vessels of Honour. And, as *St. Paul* speaks, *Who is sufficient for these Things ?* Who able to explain, or to give an Account of God's wondrous Proceedings ? If, as *Elibu* told *Job*, *God gives not Account of any of his Matters*, it is in vain for us Men to seek after a Reason : The best Reason in the World is his own holy Will, and his own good Pleasure. He declares, indeed, in the Sequel of this Parable, *that he gives to every Man according to his Ability*. Though, I doubt, almost every Man is apt to think otherwise, and is ready to complain of his unequal Distribution. However, their very Complaint is a Confession and Acknowledgment of this Truth ; and the Envy of some, and the Pride of others, a clear Proof that he gives Men several Talents. And as to every one's Share, it is certainly reasonable to believe that God is best able to judge of their Capacities ; and, though perhaps every Man is for receiving five Talents ; yet when he comes to Account, he himself may desire, and wish, perhaps, he had

had received but one Talent; will then find his Mistake, and perceive what a Stranger he was to himself, and how little he was acquainted with his own Abilities.

II. I PROCEED therefore to the second Proposition: That God will call all Men to Account, for the Use or Abuse of their several Talents. And this is so reasonable, that not only the good Servant that receiv'd two, and the other that received five Talents, but the slothful and wicked, though he made no Preparation, yet expected and knew too, that he should be called to Account. He had the same Charge given him with both the other Servants; and was as certain as they were, that his Lord would return: And though he was so weak, so foolish, or so fearful, as to charge him with Severity, yet even this false Imputation, instead of excusing, (like all foolish Excuses,) served only to aggravate and increase his Offence. And if he thought his Lord so hard and austere, as to expect to reap where he had not sown, and to gather where he had not strew'd, he could not but imagine, he would expect to reap where he had strew'd and scatter'd. And, therefore, he not only deserved the Title of a slothful and wicked, but an impudent Servant, and stood self-condemned; and instead of
innocent,

innocent, pleaded even guilty, by his own Confession. It is the Opinion of some, that this slothful Servant did not only hide his Talent in the Earth, out of mere Sloth and Idleness, but out of Fear and Suspicion ; as that it might either be taken or stolen away ; or, should he venture it abroad in trading, or put it out to Use, or let it at Interest, he might lose it ; for which yet he knew he was responsible to his Lord, and for which he knew he could never make him Satisfaction. And therefore he hid it too, for better Security ; and accordingly tells his Lord at his Return, *Lo, there thou hast that which is thine*, the same thou gavest me, whole and intire, never once touched, or in the least diminished.

BUT, besides, that this is carrying the Metaphor a little too far, and stretching the Allegory till we break it in Pieces ; all this is not true yet in the Application, and quite otherwise in the moral Sense of the Parable. For though a Man may be spoil'd of his Treasure, or if he venture his Stock among the Money-Changers, though of very good Credit, and very good Ability ; yet in such a World of Deceit and Falshood, and such a World too of Chances and Accidents, he may lose it ; and not only the Use, but Principal ; yet in natural Parts, or
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SERMON II.

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in the Gifts and Graces of God's Holy Spirit, the Truth is quite contrary. These are a Treasure, which, as *Moths cannot corrupt* ; so *neither can Thieves break thorough and steal*. No Man was ever in Danger of losing his natural Parts, by Use and Exercise. This is the Way not only of improving, but preserving his Talents ; and the brightest and finest Parts in the World, without a constant, or at least a very frequent Employment, will fade and decay, and grow rusty and canker'd. Had the Lord in this Parable, entrusted this slothful (or careful) Servant, with this single Talent, only to keep it for him, till his Return ; yet in the moral Sense, he could not have done that, without Trading or Trafficking, without still using and employing his Talent. He could not have given him his own again, but it must be increased, or it would be diminished. The Grace of God, and the Gifts of Nature, are never at a Stand ; if they do not improve, they will be impaired. Man, in this Sense too, never continues in one Stay ; if he grow not better, and go every Day forward, he will grow worse too, and go every Day backward. And therefore that Servant, that hides his Talent in the Earth, or wraps it in a Napkin, that buries his Parts or lets them lie idle, does really waste

waste and imbezel his Talent, does utterly lose it, and when called to Account, will have none to produce. Men may think what they please, that they are at Liberty to use, or not to use their Talents, to live as they list, without Controul, and are not accountable to their Fellow-Servants ; yet they must too confess, that their honest and industrious Example is a Shame and Reproach to their Sloth and Idleness. However, though perhaps their Fellow-Servants cannot, or may not call them to Account, yet their Lord can, and will, and much more severely : And how will they be able to excuse their Negligence to their great Lord and Master, which they could not excuse, even to themselves, or their poor Fellow-Servants ?

III. THIRDLY, As God has given Men several Talents, and will call them to Account for their Talents ; so, in the last Place, those who have used them well shall be graciously rewarded ; and those who have used them ill, or not used them at all, shall severely be punished.

IT is, indeed, as to this Kind of Talents, not to use them at all, a Thing almost impossible : They will be ill, and foolishly, and wickedly, if not well, and wisely, and piously

piouſly employ'd. Now it is ſaid in the Parable, that when the Lord returned, and began to reckon with his Servants, *he who received five Talents, brought him five other, and he who received two, brought him two other Talents.* Upon which he commended them as good faithful Servants, and in Reward of their honeſt Pains and Industry, commanded them to enter into the Joy of their Lord. Almighty Joy ! for Servants not only to be releaſed from their Work, and diſcharged from their Labour, but ſuffered to ſhare in the Joy of their Maſter ; to partake of his State, and Honour, and Happineſs ; a Joy the moſt unſpeakable, and full of Glory ! It is not eaſy to conceive with what Fears and Apprehenſions the ſlothful Servant was poſſeſſed ; what he thought or imagin'd would become of him for his Idleneſs, when he ſtood by and heard, and ſaw his Fellow-Servants ſo highly commended, and ſo exceedingly rewarded. However he comes on with his hypocritical Confeſſion : *Lord, I knew thee an hard and auſtere Man ; reapeſt where thou haſt not ſown, and gatheſt where thou haſt not ſtrew'd ; and was therefore afraid, and went and hid thy Talent.* And was this likely to excuſe his Idleneſs ; to move his Lord to Compaſſion ? and not rather provoke him to

to Wrath and Indignation, to see him thus insolently charge his own Negligence on his Master's Severity? What could he expect, but the Sentence he received? to be cast into utter Darkness, a Place of weeping and wailing, of Sorrow too, unspeakable, and full of Misery? And thus in the Parable has our Saviour represented the final State and Condition of all good and faithful, and all wicked and slothful Christians; of those who used and improved, and of those who neglected the Means of Salvation. It concerns us all to consider this seriously; for one of these two, either Happiness or Misery, will be the Portion of every one of us here present: Though we know not which, yet every one of us certainly will be eternally happy, or eternally miserable. And, Good God! can we think of this, and not tremble? Can any Man believe (and it is almost impossible he should believe otherwise) that he shall be happy or wretched for ever, and yet never think which of these shall be his Condition? Or is not his lying idly or carelessly, a very shrewd Sign, and a strong Presumption, that he shall be wretched, and cannot avoid being wretched for ever? Does he behold this idle and unprofitable Servant cast forth into utter Darkness, and does he not perceive he shall certainly follow,

low, and there weep and wail, as idly as he lived too, and no less unprofitably ? No Man that has but the Patience to consider this Parable, but may easily discern what will be the End of his own Way of living. And if he live idly, while he is reading this Story, does as clearly read his own Fortune and Sentence, as though it were pronounced and past upon him already. His Lord will come though he stay a long Time ; the longer his Lord stays, his Doom will only be so much the heavier. He will be cast the farther out of his Presence, and thrown so much the lower into utter Darkness.

AND thus I have cleared the chief Points of this Parable ; which yet of themselves are so clear and evident, as indeed are all the Parables of our Saviour, as they hardly seem to need or want Explication. However, I have explained and insisted on these as far as was necessary : As,

THAT God has given Men several Talents.

THAT he will call them to Account for the Use of their Talents.

THAT those who have used them well shall be graciously rewarded ; and those
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who have ill used them, or not used them at all, shall severely be punish'd.

THERE are many good Inferences, may be drawn from each of these Particulars. But I shall content myself at present with a few from the first ; reserving the rest to another Opportunity.

AND, First ; This Doctrine, That God has given Men several Talents, may teach us, it is every Man's Duty and Interest to study, and learn, and understand his own Talents. To know what it is, (supposing it be something that is good and virtuous,) for which by Nature he was formed and design'd ; of what he is most capable, and in what he is most likely to succeed and excel. And when, upon a due examining himself, he shall discover his Temper and natural Inclination (supposing still it be honest and virtuous) to cherish and improve, to pursue and prosecute it with all his Endeavours. And this, in some kind, or other, may make him excellent, or more useful and serviceable to the World in his Generation: And the Want of this has occasion'd so many Mistakes in the World, and so many Miscarriages. Men think they have Talents, which they never receiv'd ; which God never gave them, and of those they are fondest, neglecting those Talents, which they have received :

ceived : And thus they are often spending their Labour and Pains to no Purpose, and make little Proficiency. It is all striving against the Stream, against the strong and impetuous Current of Nature ; and they toil in vain, and waste their Strength, lose Time and Ground, often forced to lie still, and often drove backwards. Whereas a Man that understands his Abilities, knows his Gifts and his Talents, his Powers and Capacities ; and takes the Way (still supposing it honest) to which his Genius prompts and directs, goes along with the Tide, and sails with the Wind, or flies before it, and makes a wonderful Progress. Like the good Servant in the Parable, improves and increases his Stock of Nature, makes an ample Return of the Gifts of God, and doubles his Talent.

BUT, Secondly ; As we are obliged to consider and understand ; so when we do understand, we are no less obliged to be content with our Talents. To be quiet and satisfied, though we have not so great or so many as others. We are not to murmur or repine, to look with an envious Eye on another's Endowments. If he have two, he must gain two more ; and if he have five, he must gain five other Talents. And why should we envy ? Why rather should not we and himself be afraid he

will never answer his great Obligations ? We are now, perhaps, very fond and desirous of receiving as many Talents as possible: And those of all Kinds, of Wisdom and Knowledge, of Wealth and Riches, of Power and Honour ; and even of Ease, and Leisure, and Liberty. But, as we would be Masters, so would we be Servants too of all these Talents, and be called to Account. We would have them, indeed, but we would not be questioned what we did with them ; whether we improved or abused them all, to our own Shame, and our Master's Dishonour ? Do we not daily see People possessed of all these Talents, of Knowledge and Riches, of Power and Honour, of Leisure and Liberty, and abuse them all to Sin and Vanity, to their utter Ruin, and their eternal Destruction ? We envy, perhaps, their enjoying of these Things ; but do we envy their Reckoning ? Is not the Thought enough to make not only them, but us to tremble ? We have all, God knows, even the poorest, more Talents than we know how well and wisely to manage. However our Comfort is, if we are faithful in a little, we shall be plentifully rewarded : If we receive but one Talent, and add one more to it, we shall as certainly enter into the Joy of our Lord, as they who received either two or
five

five Talents; and perhaps too, more humbly, more joyfully, and thankfully.

BUT, Thirdly. As we are not to look with an envious Eye on those who have more Talents than ourselves, so neither are we to look with a scornful Eye, on those who have less or fewer Talents. 'Tis a Question of St. *Paul*, who had as many Talents as any of the Apostles, and no doubt too, a Question which he asked himself, as well as others, *What hast thou, which thou didst not receive?* And if thou hast nothing, which thou didst not receive, why dost thou boast? Why dost thou set at nought thy Brother? He who gave thee all these, could have given him as many; and he gave thee the more, and him too the fewer, for this Design, and this only Reason, that thou shouldst supply his Wants and Defects. He has a Right to share in thy Knowledge, and he has a Property in thy Estate; he has a Title to all thine Honours. Thy Power was given thee for his Protection, thy Wisdom and Knowledge for his Instruction. That, as the same Apostle speaks on another Occasion, *Thy Abundance may be a Supply for others Wants, that there may be an Equality.* And then, as it is written, *He that gathers much will have nothing over, and he that gathers little will have no Lack.* When all Men

bring in their Gifts and Talents, (as the first Christians their Wealth,) and Distribution is made to every one according to his Need; and they themselves too will be the richer, to see others enriched by their Liberality.

And, therefore, that Servant that has two or five Talents, and makes no other Use of them but to please his Vanity, and prides himself and despises others, is not only unprofitable, but a wicked, unjust, and ungrateful Servant. And when he appears before his Lord, may see his Talents taken away from him, and given to him that had but one Talent. I conclude with a short Petition of the Church.

O Lord, we beseech thee, leave us not destitute of thy manifold Gifts, nor yet of Grace to use them alway to thy Honour and Glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore.



SERMON III.

LUKE xiii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

He spake also this Parable: A certain Man had a Fig-Tree in his Vineyard, and he came and sought Fruit thereon, and found none.

Then said he unto the Dresser of his Vineyard, behold, these three Years I come seeking Fruit on this Fig-Tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbreth it the Ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this Year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; And if it bear Fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.



WE may observe in this Parable, these four Particulars, that deserve our serious and attentive Consideration.

I. THE Goodness of God to Sinners, in waiting for their Repentance.

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II. HIS

II. His Goodness to them ; and his Kindness in Admonishing, in giving them Warning, and calling them to Repentance.

III. His Grace and Favour to them, in case they do repent.

IV. AND, Fourthly and Lastly, His Justice on all incorrigible and impenitent Sinners.

I. I BEGIN with the First : The Goodness of God to Sinners, in waiting for their Repentance.

AND this is described here in a very lively and affecting Manner, by the Good Lord of the Vineyard his coming so constantly, so duly from Year to Year, and for three Years together, still seeking and hoping to find some Fruit on the Fig-Tree. And we cannot but imagine, he tarried some Years too before his first Coming, and did not come as soon as ever the Fig-Tree was planted ; but stay'd till the Time of Fruit, till the just and proper Season ; and yet the oftner he came, and still fuller of Expectation, and with more and greater Hopes, he was but the more disappointed.

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'Tis the Opinion of a pious and a good old Expositor, and though it may seem a little too fanciful and allegorical, yet in a Parable, which is but an Allegory, such Fancies may be allow'd, so long as they do not prejudice the chief Design of the Parable; that by the Lord of the Vineyard his coming from Year to Year, and for three Years together, may be understood or represented the three great Stages of human Life, Youth, Manhood, and old Age: In Infancy and Childhood he looks for little or nothing, and Leaves and Blossoms is as much as he expects: But in Youth, and when we come to Years of Discretion, he expects to find some Fruit, and more yet in our Manhood. And even in old Age, though we bear not so much Fruit, we should be fair and well-liking. It is true, indeed, and evident to our daily Experience, that all Men do not reach to every one of these Stages; and many fall short either in the first or the second, and few arrive to the last Stage; and when too they are arrived, think 'twas scarce worth the while, they are so quite tired and wearied. And yet even this Observation, though it seem to contradict, does rather improve and enforce the Comparifon. If many are taken away in the Days of their Youth, it may teach the Young to think that it might have been their

their Condition. Those who are gone before, did perhaps as wisely, and as reasonably, or rather as weakly and as foolishly, expect to live as long as those who survive. And as they were, so might these have been deceived in their Expectation. These, as well as those, might have gone to the Grave; and those, as well as these, have been in the Land of the Living. They are all (as our Saviour speaks on another Occasion) like two Men in a Field, *one taken, and the other left*: And those who are left, sure have something else to do than be idle, or think they are only left to walk about, and take their Pleasure; there is Work for them in the Field too, as well as in the Vineyard.

OR if they have past the first Stage, and arrived to that of Manhood, it concerns them not only out of Gratitude to God Almighty, to be fruitful in good Works, but to be abundantly fruitful; and the more so, if their Youth were spent idly and unprofitably: They are then (as in the seven good Years in the Land of *Egypt*) to lay up more Stores, and make greater Provisions; and that as well in Regard of the Scarcity before, as of the ill and hard Years, that are like to come after.

OR if they are got to the third Stage, it behoves them then more speedily to be fruitful, and to make amends for their long Backwardness and Unfruitfulness; and if they do not, they can look for nothing then, but utter Extirpation.

THERE is, indeed, another little short Stage, to which almost all Men at last do arrive; and that is, a Sick and Death-Bed: To some it is so sudden, and so short, it is scarce discernable; rather a Step than a Stage, and past over in a Moment: And even to those to whom it holds a few Minutes longer, it is sure the worst Time of all, the most unfit and unlikely Season, to bring forth good Fruit, when the Tree is just falling, or dried up and wither'd.

BUT not to insist on this: Besides these great and distinct Periods of human Life, the Goodness of God to Sinners in waiting for their Repentance, is constant and continual. His Mercies (as the Prophet speaks) *are new every Morning*, and new every Evening, and *prevent the Night-Watches*; and waking or sleeping we are not only Instances, but Wonders of his Patience: It is of the Lord's Mercies we are not every Hour or every Moment consumed. When we
reflect

reflect with ourselves, how frequently, how perpetually, and how grievously we offend him, it is hard to imagine which is the greater Miracle, his creating us out of nothing, or his forbearing to reduce us to nothing again. That was a great Work ; yet this (rightly consider'd) is harder for him, and as hard for us to conceive. We see them both, and at both we stand amaz'd and astonish'd. As that has often proved, so this has almost called his Being in Question ; ungratefully enough ! When this is the very Reason, which he has given us himself, of his Patience and Long-suffering, *That he is God, and not Man* ; and God too, no less in restraining, than exerting his Power, in forbearing to destroy us, than at first in creating.

II. But, Secondly. The Goodness of God to Sinners is not only great and wonderful in waiting and expecting, but in frequently admonishing, in giving them Warning, and calling them to Repentance. Did he nothing but look on, and only let them alone, and out of the Greatness or Goodness of his Nature, slight and neglect them, and despised their Affronts ; out of a noble and generous Disposition, were unmoved and unconcerned at such poor little impotent Offenders : Did he only suffer them to go on in their Follies, and say nothing, and held

held his Peace; yet his Patience were wonderful. But this is not enough; this is much too little for infinite Goodness, and infinite Holiness; for a God that is more concern'd for the Sins of Men, than they are themselves, than they are, for even their own Ruin and Misery. He looks not on them either with a regardless or a scornful Eye; no, nor with an angry one, but an Eye of Pity: He calls upon them many, all Manner of Ways, as many Ways as they sin, he calls upon them to repent: He calls upon them, too, a thousand Times; as many thousand Times as they sin, he calls upon them to repent. He does not in this Sense, like the Lord of the Vineyard, come one Year and go away, and stay till another; but stands by them, and over them, and calls upon them continually, and they hear his Voice, like *Adam* in the Garden, and the dreadful Sentence of, *Cut it down; why cumberst it the Ground?* is still sounding in their Ears, and they fear and tremble every Time they offend. By the soft and secret Whispers of Conscience, by the kind and gentle Motions of his Spirit, by the Voice of his Angels, his Priests, and his Ministers; by the Word of his Gospel, that Gospel of Peace, and Grace, and Mercy, he calls, he invites, he entreats them to repent: And if all these will not do or prevail,

prevail, he calls upon them louder, by the furious Clamours of a guilty Conscience, of a troubled Mind and a wounded Spirit; by the Terrors of the Lord, which if they cannot persuade, might scare, at least, and frighten them to Repentance. And if these will not do, he calls upon them by outward Calamities; by Sorrows and Afflictions; by the Loss of Estates, of Friends, of Health, and almost of Life itself; he throws them sometimes on the Bed of Sickness; and if any of his Methods bring them to Confession, he takes them down from the Rack, and receives them to Mercy.

III. THE Third Instance of God's Goodness to Sinners, is his Grace and Favour to them in case they repent. The Keeper of the Vineyard here desires his Lord, that he would spare the Fig-Tree for one Year longer, till he should dig about it, and dung it; and if it bore Fruit, well; then he supposed that his Lord would be contented to let it stand in the Vineyard, and would pardon the former Want of Fruit in Hopes it would have more for the future; or, like the Land that rested in the Year of Sabbath, it would bring forth the Fruit of three Years together. It is a wonderful Instance of God's Goodness, and Mercy, to receive Sinners into his Grace and Favour on such easy Terms as Repentance; and yet as
easy

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easy as they are, the Terms too are necessary ; for notwithstanding his own infinite Mercy, and the infinite Satisfaction of his Son, and our Saviour, he cannot be reconciled to impenitent Sinners : But, if they return, though their Sins have been as Purple, as fiery, red, and as blushing as Scarlet, they shall all be forgiven, and themselves shall be whiter than Snow : The very Dye shall be taken away ; or but so much remain, as may cover them sometimes with a modest Blush, that shall add to their Beauty. And what a powerful Motive, what a mighty Encouragement, what a strong Temptation is this to Repentance, that all our past, not only Neglects, but our past Offences shall be forgot and Forgiven ? That although we had been for many Years so unfruitful, or worse than unfruitful, and instead of Figs, as though we had either been Bushes or Brambles, and had brought forth nothing but Thorns and Briars ; yet if at last we repent, and bear good Fruit, we shall not only be abundantly pardon'd, but abundantly rewarded ? Shall stay in the Vineyard, as long as we are able to stand, or grow ; and when we are done, and can no longer, and bear little Fruit, or Fruit scarce worth the bearing, we shall then be removed to a richer Soil, and a more fruitful Climate, and shall bring

bring forth more, and better Fruit too than ever. But if by any, or all these Methods we are not reclaim'd, we cannot but expect the Sentence should pass here, *Cut it down, why cumpers it the Ground?*

THE Fourth and Last Particular; and that is,

IV. THE Justice of God on all incorrigible and impenitent Sinners. And this is no more than every wise Man, that is either Lord or Keeper of a Vineyard, does in the like Case himself: And though he may be troubled to part with a Tree which perhaps he had planted, of which he was fond, and with which he was very much pleased and delighted, had often pruned, had frequently water'd, had constantly attended, and spent a great deal of Care upon it, and a great deal of Pains, and with a great deal of Pleasure; yet, after all, if it bear no Fruit, (though it goes to his Heart,) he cuts it down, and casts it away as a Shame and Offence to himself and his Vineyard: He suffers it no longer to cumber the Ground; but roots it up, and sets another and better Tree in the Place, that will bring forth his Fruit in due Season. And thus God does, and is almost constrained, and forced to do with impenitent Sinners.

Sinners. And when all his Pains, and almost his Patience is lost upon them, and he sees it is plainly to no Manner of Purpose to wait any longer, he lays the Ax to the Root of the Trees, and hews them down, and throws them out, to rot and to burn; to rot in this World, and to burn in the other: It is not only to assert his Honour and vindicate his Justice, that he takes them away, but lest they diffuse and spread their Infection, and corrupt others that stand too near them, with the Worm or the Canker. It is more than high Time to cut them down, when they are not only an useless Incumbrance, but a dangerous Nuisance, and may hinder the Growth, and spoil the flourishing State of the Vineyard.

AND thus I have considered the Chief Heads of this Parable, in respect to single Persons: And as to particular Nations I shall refer the considering of it till another Opportunity; and from what has been said, shall at present make some useful and practical Inferences by Way of Application.

I. AND the First is this, That every Man would reflect and consider with himself, whether this Story or Parable of the barren Fig-Tree, be not his own Case; and if it be his own

Case, what he thinks will be the Consequence? It is a Fault of almost all, or of many, and most People, when they hear a sad Account, or a melancholy Story, to fancy, (though perhaps theirs is worse,) yet to fancy it is not just their Condition. They see, or suspect it is the Case of their Neighbours; and their Neighbours see, or suspect it is theirs; but they still shift it off, and apply it to others, and are still unwilling to apply it to themselves: Like the Parable of *Nathan*, it is a very fine Story, and very instructive, and moving, and affecting; but they cannot endure their Conscience, like the Prophet, should tell them plainly, *Thou art the Man*; or if that honest good Seer within (that sees and knows them as well as a Prophet) tell them never so plainly, yet they do not believe, or they will not hear, or they will not regard. Be the Case never so exactly alike, they are able to find out some little Disparity: And what Effect can any good Counsel have on such Men, as will not let it come near them? that stave it off, and still keep it at a Distance? As it is said of Laws, could but one be devised that were able to put all the rest in Execution, 'twould be the best Law that was ever establish'd: So were it possible to preach such a Sermon as should put all other good Sermons in Practice

tice, it would sure be the best (next to those of our Saviour, and his holy Apostles) that ever was preached : But this is a Sermon Men must preach to themselves. We can only propose and tell them their Duty ; it is they must, apply and put it in Practice.

THIS is the first Inference, That Men would consider, whether their Case be not much the same with this of the Fig-Tree, that was barren and unfruitful.

2. AND, Secondly, if it be, as it is much to be feared it is the Case of too many, they would then consider how it comes to pass, they have so long stood untouch'd, and have not all this while been cut down and extirpated. They have seen many others, and some, perhaps, better, and some as good, and some as bad as themselves, cut down before their Faces : And what is the Reason that they are left standing ? They will not presume it is any Worth or Desert of their own, that hath saved them so long from Destruction : Had that been their Hope, and the Ground of their Confidence, they know they had long since been ruin'd for ever. And, as to others, though perhaps they may not be concerned, or they may not be able to make any Conjecture, or it does not become them to pass any Sentence on those who were cut

off in the Midst of their Wickedness, yet they cannot but know, and they cannot but tremble to think, had they been cut off so, what had become of themselves? They had been wretched, and it is an Infinite Mercy, they are not so now; that this very Moment, instead of repenting and abhorring themselves in Dust and Ashes, they are not repenting and abhorring themselves in Flames and Torments. Let but such Men imagine, (and 'tis an easy Imagination, though I confess it is terrible,) but let such Men imagine they had been taken away in their Sins and Impieties, either two, or three, or five Years ago; in what a Case had they been, and what a wretched Condition!

AND yet, all Things consider'd, it is a mere Miracle they are not at this present in this very Condition. And were they, were they now weeping and wailing in outer Darkness, what would they do, or not do, to be delivered? And why to prevent it, will they do nothing; when yet this is easy, and that is impossible?

3. BUT, Thirdly and Lastly, instead of more Inferences I would ask these Men a very few Questions. Whether they intend and resolve to repent, or not to repent? Or whether they intend and resolve upon neither; but

but leave it to Chance, and repent, or not repent, as it happens ? Or, if they are not so careless, and next to desperate, but some Time or other do mean to repent, when do they mean to begin their Repentance ? I cannot promise, nor can they promise themselves, so much as To-morrow ; but will they begin their Repentance To-morrow ? I doubt they will answer, That is too short a Warning. Allow them, (can we allow them ?) but allow them a little more Time if possible. Then let us suppose, for it is all Supposition : Will a Week serve their Turn ? No, that is too little, and scarce worth the while. Will a Month do their Business ? That is hardly much more. Will a Year content them ? Will they repent if God in his Mercy do spare them a Year longer ? Should I speak as our Saviour to the Scribes and Pharisees on the Baptism of *John*, and bid them answer this Question, I doubt they would answer too with the Scribes and Pharisees, They cannot tell. Yes, they can tell : And though afraid to answer, they know well enough they do not intend next Week or Month, or next Year to repent ; and think no more of it, than of their Dying-Day, and dread both alike ; and in all Probability, they will both come together. And this is the Truth, and this is the Conclusion of

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the whole Matter : Men delay their Repentance, till they can delay it no longer ; and never resolve to amend their Lives, till they have no Lives to amend.

I PRAY God give us Grace (to see? we do see; to know? we do know : but) to see, and to know, and to do the Things that belong to our Peace: To our Peace while we live, and to our Peace when we die : And then the Peace of God will be with us for ever.

G R A N T we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the Words we have heard this Day, without our outward Ears, may by thy Grace be so inwardly grafted in our Hearts, that they may bring forth in us the Fruit of Good living, to the Glory of thy Name, and the Salvation of our Souls, through Jesus Christ, our Lord : And the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us all evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N



SERMON IV.

M A T T. xiii. 45, 46.

THE Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Merchant-Man seeking goodly Pearls :

Who when he had found one Pearl of great Price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.



THOUGH all the Parables of our blessed Saviour are excellent in themselves, and all very useful, and always very proper and seasonable ; yet there is none that seems more useful and necessary, than this short Parable, or more proper to the present State of Religion.

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When this Pearl of great Price, is so very much sunk and so mightily fallen, is not only disesteem'd, but despised, and disparaged, as false and counterfeit ; not the Product of Heaven, or the Work of Providence, but the perfect Invention of Craft and Artifice : When this goodly Pearl is not only undervalued, but trod under Foot of Men, I shall not say, but of Swine and Brutes, that is, of senseless and unreasonable Creatures ; and those who offer it, have only the Return foretold by our Saviour, to be abused for their Kindness, to be insulted and miserably torn in Pieces.

THIS is too plainly the present Condition of the Gospel of Christ, which is here called the Kingdom of Heaven, and compared to a Pearl of very great Price ; which ignorant Christians (like ignorant *Indians*) are ready to barter away for Trifles ; and which some amongst them, who would be thought too the wisest, have long since exchanged (O foolish Exchange !) for the Beads, the worthless Beads of a Rosary.

IN speaking therefore to this Parable, I shall,

I. FIRST endeavour to shew the Wisdom of those who, like the Merchant in the
Text,

SERMON IV.

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Text, are ready to part with all they have, for the Purchase of this Pearl, that is, the Christian Religion.

II. AND, Secondly, the Folly of those who are ready to part with this Religion on any Account whatsoever.

BOTH which I shall enforce with some useful Applications.

I. FIRST, then, to shew the Wisdom of those who are ready, with the Merchant in the Text, to part with all they have, for the Purchase of this Pearl, or the Christian Religion.

AND the Wisdom of this Purchase will plainly appear from these Considerations:

1. FIRST, Because it is cheap and very easy.

2. SECONDLY, Because it is great and very valuable.

3. THIRDLY, Because it is sure and certain.

4. AND Fourthly, Because it is lasting and eternal.

I. FIRST,

I. FIRST, then, the Purchase is very cheap and easy.

AND that upon these two Accounts.

1st, BECAUSE it may easily be had.

2dly, AND may be had too, upon easy Conditions.

1st, OUR Case is not like that of the Merchant here in the Parable, who in Search of a good Pearl, is supposed and represented as a Trader, a Traveller, a Merchant-Adventurer, wandering about into foreign Countries, from one Kingdom to another People ; through many Dangers, and many Difficulties, and many Disappointments, before he could meet with a Pearl to his Mind, with such an one as he thought to be well worth his Purchase.

BUT the Kingdom of Heaven, that is, the Gospel or Christian Religion, is brought home to us, even to our Doors, is tender'd, is offer'd, is almost obtruded and pressed upon us, can scarce be refused, and hardly avoided. We are not obliged, like the antient Philosophers, to travel Abroad for Wisdom and Knowledge ; to visit every Nation, examining their Laws and their Institutions, and some perhaps wise, and more very

very foolish. But we have much the best and truest Philosophy, and more Wisdom at home, than not only the Heathen, (but perhaps) all the Christian World can afford. What *Moses* said to the People of *Israel*, concerning the Law, *This Commandment, which I command thee this Day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it afar off. It is not in Heaven, that thou shouldst say, who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou should say, who shall go over the Sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?* is as true, or truer, concerning the Gospel: It is not hidden from us, nor is it afar off: It is not like the Law, obscured with Shadows, or reveal'd in a Number of Types and Figures. The Sense and Meaning of it is not remote, nor the End and Design afar off, at a Distance, much less is it beyond the Seas, that we should say in our Hearts, (as too many are ready to say,) *who shall go over the Seas for us, and bring it unto us?* when what they would bring is no more like to the Gospel, than the Calf of *Horeb* to the Worship of *Israel*; a molten Image their high Priest has devised, and made up of nothing but only the Earrings and Jewels of the People. So that if the Gospel be hid

to

to any at this Time of Day, it is only hid to those that are lost : To those, in whom the God of this World has so blinded their Eyes, that they cannot see the Light of the Gospel, though it shine all around, and as clear as the Light of the Sun at Noon-Day. Amidst so many and various Occasions, and constant Opportunities, it is rather Difficult to escape the Knowledge of our holy Religion. And there is hardly any, though never so ignorant, but knows enough for his eternal Salvation.

2dly, AND as this Pearl of great Price, may be easily had, without much Trouble, without any great Labour or Travel, so may it be had too, upon easy Conditions. The Terms are so gentle, so fair, an so reasonable, as no Man alive can make any Exception ; and no Man, for Shame, in his Wits can refuse. For what does he give ? What, but such Things as he should even be willing to part with ? However, should be glad to be rid of them on any, the least, or no Consideration ; should give them away, like Alms to the Poor, though he looked or hoped for nothing again. The Price he pays for this inestimable Jewel is only the Trash of Follies and Vanities, Things which indeed (to use the Apostle's Expression) are no better

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better than *Dung* or Dirt, in Comparison of gaining Christ, that is, the Knowledge of the Christian Religion: He only parts with Hay and Stubble, not only the most light, but combustible Matter, for Gold and Silver, and precious Stones of an infinite Value. He is only desired to quit those Things, which, if he retains, will beggar and undo him, will make him both poor and wretched for ever; will not purchase one Drop of Water, when he is dying with Thirst in Flames and Torments. He exchanges his wild and unruly Passions, for a quiet Mind, and Peace of Conscience: His Excess and Riot, those troublesome Vices, he gives in Exchange for those pleasant Virtues of Temperance and Sobriety; his Pride, for a meek, and an humble Spirit, which is not only in the Sight of God, but in the Sight of Men too, of greater Price, of more Esteem, than the highest Places, or Titles of Honour. In a Word, he parts with Sin and Misery (and what is his Loss?) in Exchange for Innocence, (and how great is his Gain too?) in Exchange for Happiness.

2. SECONDLY, And this is the next Consideration, that may serve to recommend the Wisdom of this Purchase, That it is not only cheap and easy, but great and valuable;

ble; as much worth, as all this World and the other : For it is not only present Happiness, but Heaven, that is the Prize of our High Calling. But how great is the Blessing either of present Piety, or future Felicity, none can conceive, but those who enjoy ; nor can even those who enjoy them express. I am verily persuaded that a good sincere Christian who lives in the Practice of his holy Religion, is better pleased, and thinks himself greater, and richer, and happier, than the Men of this World with all their Abundance, when their Corn, and their Wine, and their Oil increases : And the Law of his God is of more Value to him, and dearer than Thousands of Gold and Silver. And I am more fully persuaded, that even the lowest, the least Saint in the Kingdom of Heaven, would not part with his Bliss, one Hour, or Moment, for the Kingdoms of this World, and all their Glories. There is not only a great Gulph fixed betwixt Heaven and Hell, but Heaven and Earth too, and those who are there cannot, on any Terms, be persuaded to come hither again.

3. THIRDLY, What farther may serve to recommend the Wisdom of this Purchase, It is sure and certain.

AND

AND this exceedingly enhances the Value, and endears the Worth of the Purchase. Take the Kingdom of Heaven, in either Senses, for the Gospel of Christ, or eternal Happiness; and to the willing Bidder, and the ready Buyer, and the hearty Purchaser, by the Grace of God, they are both of them certain. Our blessed Saviour will no more refuse, or reject those, who come to him now, and will hear his Word, and obey his Gospel, than he will even refuse or reject them hereafter. If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of his Doctrine; and if he have his Fruit unto Holiness, he shall have the End, even Life everlasting.

Now amongst all these worldly Pursuits, though a Man should venture, like the Merchant in the Parable, and to compass the Pearl he so highly esteems, should go and sell even all that he has, his very Body and Soul too, he may fail of the Purchase.

THERE are three Things, especially, which this World admires; Wealth and Riches, Power and Honour, Fame and Reputation. And yet, let any Man pursue these Things with the greatest Pains, and Labour, and Industry, and Cost and Charges; with the
Expence

Expençe of his Health, and Quiet, and Liberty, and of his Life itself, he may fail and miscarry.

RICHES (says the wisest Man in the World, and the richest Man in his Time,) *do make themselves Wings, and fly away,* like an Eagle towards Heaven, as strongly, and as swiftly, past Recal or Recovery, and both out of Reach, and out of Sight, in a Moment. And *wilt thou set thine Eye* (says he) *upon that which is not ?* So short and uncertain, it has scarce any Being; and whilst thou lookest on it so fondly and wishfully, in the Twinkling of thine Eye, is gone too, and vanished, and leaves no Track behind it, but only of Sorrow, and Grief, and Vexation.

AND, as to Power, and Honour, and Dominion, how uncertain they are, the World has always abounded with Instances ; and some just, and some sad Examples ; and some to be despised, and some to be pitied. We have not only heard with our Ears, and our Fathers have told us, but have seen with our Eyes, and may tell our Children; and when they come up too, they may tell their Children the same ; the same Stories of fallen Favourites, and fallen Princes, of Men in Honour, and of Men in Disgrace :
And

SERMON IV. 65

And these Revolutions are almost as natural, as those of Day and Night, or the Change of Seasons, of Spring and Fall, and Summer and Winter; and perhaps too, as great an Instance of Providence. The Scripture itself compares all the Glory of Men to the Grass or the Flowers of the Field; they spring and rise, and grow and flourish; and they fade and decay, and die and perish: The same Sun that raised them at first out of the Dust of the Earth, and set them with Princes, is no sooner risen upon them again, with a scorching Heat, but they are dried up and withered.

AND as Wealth and Riches, and Power and Honour, are Things very uncertain, so is Fame and Reputation. Though one would think, that this were more certain, than either of those; they depending on Things without us, and on other Mens Pleasure; but this on our own wise and good Management, on our own prudent and virtuous Actions; *So long as thou dost well unto thyself*, says the Psalmist, *Men will speak good of thee*; and much more, sure, so long as thou dost well unto thyself and to others. And yet, do what thou wilt, and let thy Behaviour be never so innocent, and thine Actions never so worthy and commendable, thou shalt not

escape, and perhaps be traduced for thy very best Actions. This Pearl of great Price, and, in some Mens Esteem, the fairest and richest of any, though thou sellest all thou hast, thou shalt not buy ; or if thou hast bought, thou shalt not enjoy : They will find some Fault, some Flaw or other ; or if they cannot find any Blemish, yet it is not well set, or it is not well hung, or it makes too much Shew, and is all Vain-Glory, and mere Ostentation. *Solomon*, indeed, tells us, *a good Name is better than precious Ointment* : And it strangely revives and refreshes the Spirits ; and yet it soon exhales and evaporates ; and, what is worse, has often the Fortune of strong Perfumes, which some People can hardly endure, and to the weak and prejudiced, is very offensive. And what Hopes of safely enjoying or keeping a Good, that lies at the Mercy of so many Enemies ?

BUT now, both the Gospel and eternal Salvation, are Things so sure, that if, like the pious and devout *Mary*, we make them our Choice, they shall not, and cannot be taken from us. In these we shall hardly be ever disturb'd, and never deprived, unless by our own Weakness and folly, or by others Requests and Importunity, we are willing to quit and part with them ourselves.

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We may sit at the Feet of the blessed Jesus as long as we live, and hear his Doctrine; and sit again at the Feet of the same blessed Jesus for ever hereafter, and see his Glory.

4. FOURTHLY, And this is the Fourth and Last Consideration, which, above all, recommends the Wisdom of this Purchase: That it is not only cheap and easy, great and valuable, sure and certain, but lasting and eternal.

WHATEVER of Good, or Worthy, or Excellent, of Great or Glorious, this World can afford, it is but at best of a short Continuance; and though we think it a mighty Journey, and a huge Way, and almost tedious from Youth to Old Age, and we go so slowly, we shall never come thither; yet when we are come, and look behind, it was but a Step, and passed over as Yesterday; and yet the next Step we take is into our Graves; and that may, perhaps, be To-morrow; or, if not now, yet some Time or other it will be To-morrow; and at last, the very next Hour or Moment. And when that dreadful Hour approaches; that amazing and terrible, that hasty Moment of our final Departure, we must leave these Things, and, though never so unwillingly,

bid them a long, a last, and everlasting Farewel. They can none of them go down with us into the Grave, or if they could, they could do us no Manner of Service : Were all our Wealth, our Gold and Silver, sent after us thither, it would only be throwing of Earth to Earth, and Ashes to Ashes, and Dust to Dust ; and look but like burying us over again. And as for our Honours, and all our Titles, they can go no farther than the Outside of our Tombs, or Sepulchres, to be read by some, and censur'd by others ; and by a great many more, never so much as read or regarded ; nay, perhaps, all our Titles of Honour are neither ours, nor theirs that come after, and only stand a perpetual Monument of Shame and Disgrace to our vain and foolish, or our base and degenerate, or, at least, our unhappy and wretched Posterity. And, as to the other Good, (though rarely acquired, and hardly purchased,) of Fame and Reputation, it seems more lasting than either of the other ; and we give it a greater and an higher Title than this World can afford, and call it Immortal ; yet this Immortal must put on Mortality, and even this Incorruptible submit to Corruption ; and Time itself be swallowed up

up of Eternity. When the last Flame shall seize the World, and the Elements melt with fervent Heat, not only the Earth, but the Works therein shall all be dissolved; the mighty Actions, and the famous Exploits, perhaps, like the Heavens, with a great Noise, and perhaps with little or no Noise at all too, shall pass away. But though all these Things be dissolved, we, nevertheless, *according to his Promise*, as the Apostle speaks, *do look for new Heavens, and a new Earth, that shall continue for ever.*

HAVING thus, as briefly and plainly as possible, endeavoured to shew you the Wisdom of those who, with the Merchant in the Text, are ready to part with all they have, to purchase this Pearl, that is, the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Gospel of Christ, and eternal Happiness; I should now proceed to shew you the Folly of those, who are ready to part with this Pearl of great Price, their Holy Religion, and their Hopes of Salvation, on any Account whatsoever: And though we may think it is almost impossible Men should be so foolish, yet there is nothing more evident, and nothing more obvious to our daily Experience, than

for a Fool and his Religion to be easily parted.

BUT this I must reserve to another Opportunity; and shall only, for the present, inforce what has been said with some useful Applications. And surely, if we cannot but acknowledge the Wisdom of this Merchant in the Text, in selling all that he had, for so is a Pearl as the Gospel of Christ, and the Kingdom of Heaven, we cannot be ashamed of following so wise an Example. We have, indeed, one Example to the contrary, and recorded in Scripture; but it is so sad a Story, as we can hardly read without Grief and Compassion, and never hear it, but, like the young Man himself, we sigh, and are sad too, and go away sorrowful. What a Pity it is, that so hopeful a Person, in so fair a Way to Heaven, that had kept the Commandments even from his Youth, for Want of one Thing more, for lack of going but one Step farther, when he was so nigh to Heaven should never yet enter?

It is said, that our Saviour looked upon him and loved him; and had he loved our Saviour too, more than his Riches, his Praise long ago had been in the Gospel,

spel, and he perhaps in our Saviour's Affection, even next to his dear and beloved Disciple : But what he lost in not being so wise as this Man in the Text ! even all that he had, which he would not sell and give to the poor ; even all that he had he lost ; and besides, a glorious Name, and a blessed Immortality. Had he took up his Cross, and followed our Saviour, he had now, long since, been with him in Paradise, had Treasures in Heaven, and his Cross been turned to a Crown of Glory. Unhappy Youth ! and unhappy they who follow his Example ! But infinitely wiser and happier are they, who follow this Merchant here in the Parable ; and are ready to part with all that they have for this Pearl of great Price, in the Language of Scripture so often compared and preferred to Rubies, more precious than the Onyx-Stone, or the Saphire : The true Evangelical Urim and Thummim, the lively Oracles of God, which every Christian wears in his Breast, and his Heart continually : And if he follow their Light and Direction, will qualify him at last, and gain him an Entrance into the Holy of Holies, and eternal Happiness.

*To which God vouchsafe to bring us all
for Christ Jesus sake : To whom with
the Father, and the blessed Spirit, be all
Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty,
and Dominion, now and for ever.
Amen.*



SERMON



SERMON V.

JOHN ii. 11.

This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory, and his Disciples believed on him.



HAVING lately discoursed on some of the Parables of our Saviour, I shall now proceed to some of his Miracles. That was a very plain, and easy, and familiar, this as plain and intelligible, but a more convincing and powerful Way of Instruction. I confess, indeed, I have quitted my first Design a little sooner than I intended, and shall give you the Reasons. I consider human

human Nature is apt to be wearied and tired with the same Things, though never so excellent : And I consider too, that our blessed Saviour himself, did not speak all his Parables at once, or together, but at several Times, and upon several Occasions : But chiefly, because I find most of the other Parables, so very well explained, by some of our own learned, and pious, and eloquent Writers, that, as *Solomon* says, *What can the Man do, that cometh after the King ?* So what can a Man say, that cometh after so many eminent and excellent Divines ? Even what has been said, and perhaps not so well too, as it has been said already,

AND, therefore, I shall proceed, or at least for the present, to some of our Saviour's Miracles.

AND here I shall observe too, the same Method as formerly : And, as I entered on those Discourses with a general Preface, concerning the Use and Advantage of that antient Way of instructing by Parables ; so I shall begin these with a general Discourse concerning the Use and Advantage of Miracles ; and not only their Use and Advantage, but their absolute Necessity,
for

for the proving of any new Doctrine or Religion.

THOUGH here, by the Way, it is well worth observing, that not only Reveal'd, but Natural Religion, is itself introduced, and founded on Miracles; and perhaps too, the greatest, even the World itself, or the visible Creation.

AND I am verily persuaded, were a Man born and bred all his Days, in some close and dark Cavern, he would never have any Notion or Thoughts of a Deity; But let him come forth, and see the Light, and the Universe, he would soon be astonished, and fall down and adore some unknown God, as well as the wisest *Athenian*. It was chiefly from hence, if not from hence alone, that the Heathens derived all their Knowledge of a Deity; and not only the learned, but even the most Ignorant, the barbarous *Indians*, though they worshipped the Sun, (as much as we do their Gold, and hardly too, acknowledge a Power above it,) yet own'd a Being superiour. It was no weak Argument, that of one of their Emperors, who, looking up to the Sun, (which was held to be unlawful,) and reproved by the High-Priest, and still persisting in his View, and the Priest
in

in his Reproof, he turned upon the Priest, and asked him this Question: *Which of all you, says he, dares bid me, who am your Sovereign Lord, to rise up, and go a long Journey?* The Priest replied, *None would be so bold as to do so.* But (continues he) *if I command the greatest of my Princes to go from hence to Chily, (a far Country,) will he not do it?* To this the other return'd, *That none durst disobey him.* Why then I conclude, (says the Prince,) *that our Father the Sun, must needs have a mightier Lord than himself, that commands him every Day to take such a long Journey; for if he were the supream Lord, he would certainly, some Time or other lie still and rest himself.*

HOWEVER the good Prince might be mistaken in his Philosophy, and perhaps too not mistaken, yet he was right in his Divinity. It was much such an Argument as that of the Centurion to our Saviour, to shew he was a Man of Authority, that had Soldiers and Servants under him: *And I say unto one, Go; and he goeth; and to another, Come; and he cometh; and to a third, Do this; and he doth it.* And how much greater then was he, that could command all the Armies, and the whole Host of Heaven, to go at his Will and Pleasure, and

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to march every Day round the World at his Order ? So true is that of the Psalmist, *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy Work. One Day telleth another, and one Night certifieth another ; there is neither Speech nor Language, but their Voices are heard among them ; their Sound is gone out into all Lands, and their Words into the End of the World.* Such a Sound and a Voice, such a Speech and a Language, as every Nation under Heaven, *Parthians* and *Medes*, *Cretes* and *Arabians*, *Lybians* and *Egyptians*, in their own Tongue in which they were born, do hear the wonderful Works of God. And whoever considers that prodigious Fabrick, the Beauty and Glory of those Heavenly Bodies, their Number and Order, their constant and regular, and yet their swift, (their inconceivably swift,) and rapid Motion, and a thousand Things more, and is not convinced of the Being of God, cannot, and does not deserve to be convinced. Let the Fool go for a Fool, as he is : He is neither worth keeping, nor worth the correcting.

It was a very wise Saying of a very wise Person, both Statesman and Philosopher, the great Lord *Verulam*, as I find it in the fourteenth Chapter of his Essays,
That

That God never wrought Miracles to convince Atheists, because his Ordinary Works convince them. And if the Holy David, when he considered the Heavens, the Moon, and the Stars, which God had ordained, had Reason to cry out, *Lord, what is Man, that thou art mindful of him?* that thou regardest so poor and so mean a Creature? how justly might he cry out, and with much more Astonishment; Lord, what is Man, that he should not be mindful of thee; that he should not regard his Creator?

BUT however these Things may serve to persuade us of the Being of a God, (and if a God, to be rever'd, and honour'd, and worshipp'd;) yet they will carry us no farther. By the Frame of the World, and almost every Thing in it, we may learn there is a Deity, and some of his Attributes, his Wisdom, and Power; but not his Will, or his Pleasure. This we cannot know, unless it be declared; and who can tell the Mind of God, but only those to whom it is revealed? And how can we hear, except they preach? and how can they preach, except they be sent? and how can we know, why should we believe they are sent from God, unless they give us some Pledge or Token, some sure, and certain Sign of their Mission?

SERMON V. 79

Mission? So that Miracles are absolutely necessary for the Proof of any Doctrine, that is not discoverable by the Light of Nature.

AND this, God willing, shall be the Subject of my present Discourse.

I. FIRST, then, I shall endeavour to shew that Miracles are necessary to confirm any new Doctrine or Religion.

II. SECONDLY, That when any new Doctrine or Religion is thus fully confirmed, there is no Need or Occasion of any more Miracles.

III. AND, Thirdly, That those who saw the Miracles and did not believe, and those who have heard them sufficiently attested, and yet will not believe, are both (though not equally, yet) very great Sinners. As those were unpardonable; so these are inexcusable. And these too, except they repent, shall never be forgiven in this World, nor the other.

I. FIRST, then, to shew that Miracles are necessary for the confirming of any new Doctrine

Doctrine or Religion. Whoever teaches any new Religion, either speaks of himself; and then, what can he offer beyond the Dictates of mere human Reason? and which every wise Man, that thinks and considers, might offer as well too, and with the very same Reason; and which all wise Men in the World, in all Ages, have offer'd already; and this can amount, at best, to no more than Natural Religion; and so far from new, that it must needs be as old as the Flood, or as old as the Creation: And, therefore, (as is well known, and has been always observed,) those who have advanced any kind of Religion, have always professed to be divinely inspired, and to have received their Holy Rites and Ceremonies, by conversing with some of their Gods or Goddeses. And this they thought, and thought not amiss, the most likely to credit and recommend their Religion: Which, by the Way, may shew us it is a natural Notion, and the common Sense of Mankind, that all Religion, or religious Worship, should come from God, be appointed by him; and it is not in Man to direct how God should be worshipp'd. But because this Pretence to divine Inspiration is liable to every Mistake or Imposture, and one may think or profess, he has a Vision, and another a Dream, and another a Prophecy,

phesy, it is therefore but fitting, and just, and reasonable, that all such Pretenders, should shew their Title, and produce their Commission, that they come from God ; otherwise they may only come of themselves, or perhaps be sent by the great Deceiver. And this was the Prudence, or Craft, and Policy, of that old and grand Impostor *Mahomet*, who knowing very well, that he could not work Miracles, such as those of our Saviour, or the holy Apostles, protested against them, and openly declared, he was sent from God, to establish his Alcoran, by the Power of the Sword, and not that of Miracles ; and was resolved to root up, and destroy all Nations, and Kindreds, and People, that would not subscribe and submit to his Faith, or refused to embrace, and profess his Religion. Such a Way of making Disciples and Converts, as a Man would rather, and had better believe, there were no God at all, nor any Religion ; and was never yet practised by any in the World, but the two great Anti-Christes, the Church of *Rome*, and *Meccha*. It is very observeable, that these chief Enemies of the true primitive Christian Religion, appeared in the World about the very same Time, and both started together, and have run their Race, and have made a like Progress, though taking several

ral and different Courses; yet by much the same Methods, from East to West, have extended their Empire. But, certainly, this Way of enlarging his Kingdom, was never intended by the blessed Jesus, who would not suffer so much as his Person to be defended by the Sword, and thought it much better to shew his Power, by the gentle Miracle he wrought on *Malchus*, than by the Sword of St. *Peter*: And this Power he gave the Apostles, to heal the Sick, to cleanse the Lepers, to raise the Dead, and cast out Devils: And by this, and no other Means, they converted both Jews and Gentiles, to the Christian Religion. And had they not taken this Method, the World to this Day had all been either Jews or Heathens.

II. BUT, Secondly, When any new Doctrine or Religion is thus once proved, and clearly confirmed, and fully established, there is then no Necessity of any more Miracles. Should they be wrought upon every little or trifling Occasion, were they as common as the Works of Nature, and Men as ordinarily healed of their Sickness, or raised from the Dead, by a Touch of the Hand, or a Word or two speaking, it would no more be regarded, admired, or esteemed, as strange and miraculous, than Sick-

Sickness or Dying. And there is not a better or greater Confirmation, that the Works of our blessed Saviour, and the first Apostles, and the primitive Christians, in Proof of the Gospel, were truly miraculous, than that all the World to this Day, has never been able to work any such Miracles. It is the Opinion, indeed, of some learned Divines, that were Men sincerely and devoutly disposed, and truly zealous for the Conversion of Heathens, and would preach to them nothing but the pure and plain Gospel, they might be enabled, at this Day, to work Miracles : Perhaps too, they might ; but yet, it is certain, they have not wrought any ; and not only in the Ages of gross Superstition, when it could not be expected, that God should work Miracles, to convert Men from one, to another Idolatry ; yet none have been wrought ever since the Reformation, tho' the Gospel has been preached in its pure, native, and primitive Simplicity. Whether it be, that Mens Faith have failed them, and it is not so strong, so effectual, and powerful, in these later Ages, as it was in the Apostles, and the primitive Christians ; or whether the Reason for the ceasing of Miracles be like that of the Poet, for the ceasing of Oracles :

*Aut Paon solitus Templis arcere No-
centes,
Ora quibus solvat, nostro non invenit
ævo.*

The World was so wicked, that he thought their *Apollo* could not find Men good enough, or worthy, or capable of Divine Inspiration. But as there was a better, and a much truer Reason for the ceasing of Oracles, the coming of Christ, and the Light of the Gospel; so I humbly conceive too, the much truer Reason for the ceasing of Miracles, was the full Publication, and the perfect Establishment of the Christian Religion. It was confirmed by so many, that more had been needless, and it could not be confirmed too, by greater Miracles. As the Man that was born blind answered the Pharisees, who would not be answered, *I have told you already, and you did not hear, why would you hear it again?* So why should our Saviour repeat his Miracles, for what he has sufficiently confirmed already, especially to gratify some obstinate People, who, after all, do not mean to be his Disciples?

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THIS Humour, or Vanity of expecting new Miracles, is fully condemned in that famous Parable of the Rich Man in Torments, (and is a Sign whence it comes too,) who would needs have *Lazarus* raised from the Dead, and sent to his Brethren; but was plainly told by the Father of the Faithful, *That if they believed not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead.* It was not likely, that Men should be convinced by one single, sudden, and transitory Miracle, who were not convinced by all the Signs and Wonders, that God wrought in *Egypt*, in the Fields of *Zoan*, in the *Red-Sea*, and forty Years long in the Wilderness. And to this Purpose it is very observable, that, as *Manna* ceased as soon as ever the People were come into *Canaan*, and had eaten of the old Corn of the Land; so when they were settled there was an End of their Signs and Miracles, there was now no more Use of them: And, therefore, as the People, if they had not tilled and sowed the Ground, had deserved to starve, and would have been famished; so if they would not believe these an-

tient Miracles, that were wrought by *Moses* to confirm their Religion, they must have continued Heathens and Infidels. And this very Method God has took with the Gospel : He published it at first by his Son and our Saviour, by the Holy Apostles, and the first good Christians ; and confirmed it by a thousand and a thousand Miracles ; and what is almost as wonderful, by the Death of a thousand and a thousand Martyrs : And all this attested by the Records and Histories of every Age, and of every Nation where the Gospel has come. And if this will not satisfy, there is no Help or Remedy ; but Men must be what they please, either Deists or Atheists ; and I may venture to assure them, in the Words of our Saviour, *There shall no Sign be given to such a wicked, perverse, and unreasonable Generation.*

III. AND so I proceed to the Third Proposition, That as those who were Witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles, and yet did not believe, were utterly unpardonable ; so those who have received them, sufficiently attested, and as well as such Things can possibly be attested, and will

will not believe, are no less inexcusable. And, though it be not the Sin against the Holy Ghost, it is very near to it; and, except they repent, they will never be forgiven, in this World, or the other. Men are apt to think, that if they had lived in the Days of our Saviour, and had seen his Miracles, they should have been satisfied; as the *Jews* imagined, that had they lived in the Days of their Fathers, they should not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets: And, to shew their Abhorrence of their Fathers Cruelty, they had built Tombs, even for those very Prophets whom their Fathers had slain, and had garnished their Sepulchres, and left them as Monuments of their own Piety, and their Fathers Wickedness: And yet had these Men the same Disposition, and the same Inclination with their merciless Fathers, and slew more, and greater Prophets, and filled up the Measure (pressed down, and shaken together; and running over, all that was wanting, and even more than needed to fill up the Measure) of their Fathers Iniquities. And thus others imagine, that had they lived in our Saviour's Time, and had seen his Miracles, they should have believed; and

yet are they Men of the very same Tempers with those who saw, and did not believe. And, whatever they think, Pride and Vanity, Self-Conceit and Self-Interest, the Love of the World, and their Lusts and Passions, would blind their Eyes, and stop their Ears, and harden their Hearts; and, as they ever have done, to the End of the World, will make Men Infidels: Or if they could not deny the Matters of Fact, they would easily find some Excuse or Evasion; and rather than suffer themselves to believe, would impute them all to the Power of the Devil, though at the very same Time, they hardly believe there is any such Being. But the Ground of this strange and wild Conceit, that if they saw our Saviour, and beheld his Miracles, they should be convinced, is, because they know the Thing is impossible; for then must our Saviour have been often incarnate, and often have lived, and often have suffered, since the Foundation of the World, and in every Age too, and in every Nation, which they know cannot be, and therefore desire it, because they are sure that all this is impossible; and Men might as well resolve, and declare they will not believe, because they happen'd not to be living above sixteen hundred Years ago, and

and were not born in *Judea* or *Galilee*. God has chosen this Way ; and if they believe there is a God, they cannot but suppose, he is wiser than they are, and will not change his Counsels, nor alter his Method for their Pleasure or Humour. And yet, after all, it is shrewdly to be suspected, they do not wish he would change his Counsels, or alter his Method, and would even be sorry to see him comply with them ; for it is not their Business to be convinced or persuaded, but only excused ; and if that be their Business, they need not fear they shall want Excuses : But though they may serve them now, for a while ; yet they will not hold long, nor will serve them hereafter.

INSTEAD of Inferences, I shall briefly conclude, in the Words of the Church ; and I cannot find better, nor can there be any more useful Inference.

Let us heartily thank our Heavenly Father, that he hath vouchsafed to call us to this State of Salvation, to this Knowledge and Faith in Christ Jesus our Saviour ; and humbly beseech him to increase this Knowledge, and confirm this Faith in us evermore ; And that

that for the sake of the same Christ Jesus : To whom with the Father, and the blessed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever.



SERMON



SERMON VI.

JOHN ii. 11.

This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory; and his Disciples believed on him.



Have lately, (as some of you may possibly remember,) in order to the Discourses I design on the Miracles of our Saviour, laid down these Three Propositions.

- I. FIRST, That Miracles are absolutely necessary for the proving of any new Doctrine or Religion.

II. SE-

II. SECONDLY, That when any new Doctrine or Religion is thus once proved, and sufficiently confirmed, there is then no Necessity of any more Miracles.

III. AND, THIRDLY, That those who saw the Miracles, and those who have received them sufficiently attested, and yet have not believ'd, are both (tho' not equally, yet) very great Sinners; as those were unpardonable, so these are inexcusable; and these too, except they repent, will never be forgiven in this World, nor the other.

THUS far I have gone by Way of general Preface; and shall now proceed to our Saviour's first Miracle, which he wrought at a Marriage in *Cana of Galilee*; and is only recorded by his beloved Disciple and Apostle St. *John*, and not mentioned by any of the other Evangelists: A fair and clear Confirmation of the Opinion of some learned Men, that, as the last Chapter in St. *John's* Gospel was an Appendix to his, and most probably added by the Church of *Ephesus*; so his was an Appendix to the other Gospels, and designed to supply what they had omitted:

ted : As not only our Saviour's heavenly Extraction, they having only mentioned his earthly Genealogy, but those other long and divine Discourses immediately before his Passion, and, amongst some other Passages, the very first Miracle which he wrought at a Marriage in *Cana of Galilee*. All this is probable, and seems grounded on very good Reason and Authority. But there are other Opinions, received and maintained, that have neither any good Reason or Authority, nor so much as any the least Probability ; and yet such as relating to this present Miracle, deserve to be considered, though not to be confuted. The Author of a Treatise, call'd the *Life of Jesus*, tells us, there was in the Church a Tradition, that this very Marriage, which St. *John* here relates, was his own Marriage ; and quotes for it, a certain (or uncertain) Preface of St. *Jerome* to St. *John's* Gospel ; and that our Saviour came, not only as invited, but on Purpose and Design to take St. *John* away, and persuade and engage him to a State of Celibacy : Or, as others, that St. *John* of his own Accord, resolved on that State of Life, as being convinced, (convinced of what?) of the Virtue and Perfection of a single Life, by so strange a Miracle ; a Conviction almost as strange and miraculous ! There
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are some have gone farther, and tell us, that as our Saviour took away the Bridegroom, so the blessed Virgin took away the Bride, whom she devoted and consecrated to the Service of God; and who lived with others of the same Profession under the Care and Tuition of the Virgin *Mary*; as though it were not enough to make her the Queen of Heaven, unless too, they made her the first Lady Abbess. I should not have related this ludicrous Story, but that I consider, that perhaps at a Marriage, some innocent Mirth may be a little allowable. But to leave these Legends, and return to the Scripture. *The third Day, there was a Marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there, and both Jesus was called, and his Disciples, to the Marriage.* It is the unanimous Observation of all unprejudic'd and disinterested Writers, that our Saviour by his Presence, and by his very first Miracle, which he wrought at a Marriage, designed to honour the State of Matrimony; but, if the Legend be true, he could not have done it a greater Dishonour, and was contrary, besides, to his own Rule and Precept, *Whom God had join'd, let no Man put asunder*; unless they will answer, (and they have answered as wisely upon other Occasions,) that it was not Man,
but

but the Son of God, or God himself; that, as he had join'd them together, might put them afunder. Much such an Excuse as some have made for St. *Peter's* denying his Master, when he curst and swore that he knew not the Man; that is, he knew not the Man, for he knew that he was God; and thus to save St. *Peter's* Credit they care not what becomes of our Saviour's Honour. And though he had foretold St. *Peter's* Denial, yet rather than grant it, they make our Saviour himself a false Prophet: But, as the Scripture speaks, *Let God be true, and every Man a Liar*, even St. *Peter* himself, and all his Successors. I say it is a general and unanimous Observation of all, or most Writers, that our Saviour, by his Presence, and his very first Miracle, design'd to countenance and honour the State of Marriage; a State that was never discountenanced or discouraged, but in the worst of Times, in dark or loose Ages, and only disparaged by Monks and Libertines.

IN speaking to this Miracle, I shall only insist on the most material and remarkable Passages: Which seem to be these;

I. THE

I. THE Virgin's Words to our Saviour.

II. OUR Saviour's Answer to the Virgin.

III. THE Miracle itself.

IV. AND the Effect of the Miracle, the Belief of the Disciples ; *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory, and his Disciples believed on him.*

I. THE First Thing then observeable is, The Virgin *Mary's* Address to our blessed Saviour : For by these Words, *they have no Wine*, she doth not seem so much to inform or acquaint our Saviour with their Want, as to intimate her Desire, and in a Manner to intreat him, that, some Way or other, he would supply the Defect. And why the blessed Virgin, should be so much concern'd to have this Want supplied, is very well conjectur'd by the best Commentators ; and the Conjecture seems to be easy and natural : That, probably, the blessed Virgin was related, and of Kin to the Family ; and this they not only gathered by her being there beforehand,

and

and, as it were, in Readiness before our Saviour and his Disciples were invited: But by her travelling so far as from her own Abode in *Nazareth*, to *Cana* in *Galilee*, which was above thirty Miles; and they can hardly conceive she would have taken so long a Journey to attend, and, perhaps, assist at the Marriage of a Stranger. And therefore, they think, she was a little more concerned, to observe this Want or Misfortune, for the Credit of her Friends; and perhaps too, her poor Friends and Relations. But chiefly, because this Want or Defect might be occasion'd by a greater or more numerous Company, than at first was design'd; our Saviour and his Disciples, who upon her Account too, it was likely, were called and invited to the Marriage. This is all very well, and so long as Mens Conjectures are fair and reasonable, they do no Harm to the Truth of the Gospel, but may serve to give some Light to the History. But why the Virgin *Mary*, should conceive or imagine, that our blessed Saviour should supply this Defect (as she seems to do,) some Way or other, by Miracle, has been variously, though not so very wisely conjectured. Some think she grounded her Hope and Expectation on some former Miracles, which they sup-

pose our Saviour might have wrought at Home, in his private Estate, when he lived with *Joseph* at *Nazareth*: And on like Occasions might supply them in their poor and mean Condition. But this is all Fancy, and pure Imagination; and though *St. John* tells us, in the Close of his Gospel, that our blessed Saviour wrought many more Miracles than were written in that Book, yet I do not think these were any of those Miracles. And, therefore, others have more wisely conceived, that she grounded her Hope and Belief of some Miracle, on the many Prophecies, and plain Declarations, that were made by the Angel, by *Zachary*, and *Elizabeth*, by the Shepherds, the wise Men, and by *St. John* the Baptist; which Things she kept and pondered in her Heart: And, no doubt too, discoursed on them often with our Saviour, in his private Estate, when daily and continually, she enjoy'd his most Holy and Divine Conversation: And he who would not suffer his most common Disciples to be ignorant who he was, would certainly open the Scriptures, and expound them to her concerning himself. And we cannot but think she was very well assured, that he was *the Christ the Son of God*, or the *Messiah*, before *St. Peter's* Confession. However, she does not either plainly request or ask

ask for a Miracle, but with all Submission only lays the Case before him, and leaves him to his own Wisdom and Pleasure. She knew not the Language she has since been taught by some of her Votaries, To command her Son by the Right of a Mother, *Jure matris impera Filio*; and yet she had sure as much Authority over him then, as she has over him now, in his Exaltation: And what had then been only Indecency, and Want of Respect, I am sure is now no less than Blasphemy; and the blessed Virgin might now answer her Worshippers in the Words of our Saviour, *What have I to do with you?* Why do you trouble and disturb me with your Prayers and Devotions? Do that which my Son has bid you; and I am sure, he never bid you to worship, or pay me divine Adoration.

II. THE next Thing to be considered, is, our Saviour's Answer to the blessed Virgin; which looks so severe, that some have endeavoured to alter the Meaning, and to mollify, as much as they can, the Expression. *The Mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no Wine; and Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee?* Τι ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί; *What is that to thee and me?* How is their Want of Wine

any of our Concern? But, besides that this is almost as unkind, and looks like reproving the blessed Virgin for a very good Thing, her pious Desire of relieving others in Want and Distress; and was likewise agreeable to our Saviour's Disposition, and his own good Nature, not only to his Divinity, but to his Humanity; this Opinion is by most, and the best Expositors, laid aside and rejected; and the common Interpretation allow'd and embraced, as not only more natural, but more agreeable to the constant Use of this Phrase in Holy Scripture; as they shew by many Places, both of the Old and New Testament, which I shall not stay to repeat. But if Men must be softening the Expressions, though I think there is no need; for, sure, our Saviour, who spake so as never Man spake, knew well enough what he said; and never spoke any Thing but justly and properly; they should do well to consider the Reason of his Answer, which he gives us himself, that his *Hour was not yet come*. The Proposal, however it might be kind and charitable, was yet a little unseasonable; and 'tis likely she expected he would do some Miracle, in open and publick, and in the View and Presence of all the Company; but this he declin'd, as appears by his suffering none to be privy
to

to it, but only the Servants: And though she might think this a fair Occasion of exerting his Power, yet it was not for her to know the Times and the Seasons, which the Father had now put into his Hands; and he was best judge of the fittest Opportunity, both when, and where, to perform his Miracles. This was the Reason, and may serve to abate the seeming or real Harshness of the Expression: And there might be another of greater Importance, that perhaps too, occasion'd the Harshness of the Expression: And without some such Reason it is hard to account for our Saviour's Carriage towards the Virgin *Mary*: For I do not think he so much designed to check or reprove her, as to check and reprove the Zeal of others, and repress their Forwardness. We cannot but believe that our blessed Saviour had the Spirit of Prophecy, and plainly foresaw, (and the Sight even pierc'd through his own Heart also,) and would therefore endeavour to stifle, and prevent, and suppress all unjust and undue Honour, that he knew would be paid her, by future Generations: And this is thought to be the truest Reason of our Saviour's treating her with so much Indifference; for whom he had certainly a due Regard, and a just Esteem, and a filial Obedience, and a natural Love, and a great Affection, not

only for her Person, but her Virtue and Piety. Give me leave, since I am fallen upon this Subject, to observe (and it is but what the Holy Scripture has thought fit to observe) his Behaviour towards her, upon all Occasions : When she feared she had lost him, and after three Days Absence, had found him among the Doctors, and began to complain, *Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us ? Thy Father and I have sought thee sorrowing* : He only answers, *How is it that you sought me ? wist you not that I must be about my Father's Business ?* But had he made some Excuse, and begg'd her Pardon, what Triumphs should we have had ? and all have been sent to the Virgin *Mary* to beg Forgiveness and Pardon for our Faults, by our Saviour's Example : And so here, if he had wrought this Miracle at her first Word, and without any Reply, we should have been told, he wrought it at her Command, and manifested only her Power and Glory : It is well if they had not added, *And the Disciples believed on her*. When a certain Woman, with Joy and Admiration, lift up her Voice, and cried, *Blessed is the Womb that bare thee, and the Paps which thou hast suck'd !* he silenced her Joy, and diverted her Wonder, with
a wife,

a wife, and grave, and pious Sentence ; *Tea rather, Blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.* And yet the Words she spoke were no more than the Angel's, that his happy Mother, whoever she was, had been highly favoured, and blessed above Women. When he was speaking to the People, and his Mother, and his Brethren were not able to come near him, because of the Multitude, and one came and told him, *Thy Mother and thy Brethren are standing without, and desiring to speak with thee ;* he answers, *Who is my Mother, and who are my Brethren ?* and stretching his Hands towards his Disciples said, *Behold my Mother, and my Brethren ! for whoever doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Mother, and Sister, and Brother.* How is this like the Behaviour of Solomon to his Mother Bathsheba, when she desired to speak with him ? *And the King rose up, and went to meet her, and bowed himself to her, and sat down on his Throne, and commanded a Seat, or, another Throne, to be set for his Mother, and she sate on his Right Hand.* And yet has all this been transferred and applied to the Holy Jesus, and the Blessed Virgin : And, as he sits on a Throne at the Right Hand of his

Father ; so she is seated (though I do not believe by his Command) on another Throne at the Right Hand of our Saviour. And they have made him speak to her much like *Solomon*, *Ask on, my Mother, for I will not say thee Nay* ; and has promised her there, he will deny her nothing : And, what is worse, they have made her ask his very Kingdom : And, what is yet worst of all, he has granted even that, as though he were not so wise as *Solomon*. There is but one Place more in which our Saviour is mentioned with the Blessed Virgin ; and that is at his Passion, when he was just expiring, and beheld his Mother standing by the Cross, and the Disciple whom he loved standing by her, he said no more to her, than, *Woman, behold thy Son* ; and to the Disciple, only, *Behold thy Mother* ; and from that Hour, 'tis said, that Disciple took her to his own Home, and used her, and treated her with all Care and Respect, as she had been his own Mother ; and, no doubt, with much more, as she was the Mother of his Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus. And such let her have too, in God's Name ! but no more, in the Name, and for the sake of God Almighty.

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I HAVE engaged in this Subject, before I was aware, a little farther than I intended: However, I shall now proceed, and shall at present leave this Miracle in *Cana of Galilee*, for a greater at *Nazareth*, I mean the Worship of the Virgin *Mary*, which, though of itself it be strange and wonderful, yet is it stranger how it even gained any Credit or Belief; and yet has it been carried (like her Chamber at *Nazareth*, or her Chappel at *Loretto*, tho' I think not by Angels) all over Christendom.

It is a wise Remark of a very good Writer, that whoever shall observe the great Honour and Worship that is paid the Virgin *Mary*, would think she was mentioned in every Page of Scripture, and the Bible were full of her, from one End to the other. And so indeed it is, as they have managed the Business. There is hardly any Thing said of God himself, but they have applied, and translated to the Virgin *Mary*: Where, by a bold and a new kind of *Index Expurgatorius*, the Name of Lord is expunged, and that of Lady inserted. I shall not insist on small, but give you some great Instances.

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The whole Book of Psalms has been prophanelly abused, and converted to her Service, and made the Virgin *Mary's* Psalter. The first Words of the first Psalm are read thus, in this new Version. *Beatus vir, qui diligit nomen tuum, Virgo Maria;* that is, *Blessed is the Man that loves thy Name, O Virgin Mary.* The Second thus, *Why do the Heathen rage? Why do our Enemies imagine vain Things? Stretch out thy Right Hand, O Mother of God, and protect us.* Neither the Time, nor your Patience, nor (I believe) your Piety, will suffer me to repeat them all; and, therefore, I shall only mention a very few more, and of those too, only the Beginnings. *The Heavens declare thy Glory, O Virgin. Bring to our Lady, O ye Sons of God, bring Praise and Worship to our Lady. Give Strength to thy Servants, O Holy Mother, and bless them that magnify thee. Like as the Hart desires the Water Brooks, so longs my Soul after thy Love, O Holy Virgin. Let Mary arise, and let her Enemies be scatter'd. Give the King thy Judgments, O Lord, and thy Mercy to the Queen his Mother. Truly God is loving unto Israel, even to such as worship his Mother. O how amiable are thy Dwellings, O Lady of Hosts! It is a good Thing*

Thing to give Thanks, and to confess to the Virgin Mary, and to sing Praises to her Glory. Praise the Virgin Mary, O my Soul, and all that is within me, praise and glorify her Name. And the Lord said unto my Lady, Mother, sit thou at my Right Hand. O Praise the Lady all ye Heathen, glorify her all ye Nations, for her merciful Kindness remains upon us for ever. And so on to the very End of the Psalms. O praise our Lady of Heaven, praise her in the Height ; Praise her Sun, and Moon ; O praise her in her Holiness ; Praise her in her Virtues and Miracles : Let every Spirit, or every Thing that hath Breath, praise our Lady.

IF this be not enough, you shall have more, if you can bear the Hearing. To this they have added the Song of the three Children. *O all ye Works of the Lord, bless our Lady, praise and magnify her for ever : O ye Angels bless our Lady. And the Song too of Zachary, instead of, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel ; Blessed be thou, Lady Mother, save us from all our Enemies, and perform the Mercy promised to our Fathers and us ; that we being delivered*
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out of the Hands of our Enemies, may serve thee without Fear. And the Song of poor Simeon : Now lettest thou the *Servant* of the Lady depart in Peace, for mine Eyes have seen the Salvation of Mary. Even her own Song is turned upon her : My Soul doth magnify the Lord, and my Spirit hath rejoiced in my Lady. Nothing has escaped them, even the most solemn *Te Deum* : We praise thee, O Mary ; we acknowledge thee to be the Lady. All the Earth doth worship thee, the Spouse of the Everlasting Father. To thee all Angels, &c. continually do cry, Holy, Holy Mary, Mother of God. The Holy Church throughout all the World doth acknowledge thee, the Mother of an Infinite Majesty. Thou art the Queen of Glory, O Mary. And so on to the very Conclusion, O Lady have Mercy upon us, have Mercy upon us : O Lady, let thy Mercy lighten upon us, as our Trust is in thee.

AND to all these Prayers, and Praises, and Thanksgivings, they have added a Creed too, and as strict as the *Athanasian*. *Quicumque vult salvus esse, &c.* Whoever will be saved, before all Things,
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it is necessary, that he hold a firm Faith concerning Mary; which Faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And concludes too, in the same Manner. This is the true Faith concerning Mary; which, except a Man believe firmly and faithfully, he cannot be saved.

AND now let any Man consider, what Ground there is in Scripture, for this extravagant Worship of the Virgin Mary. There is not so much as the least Foundation, no, not one of Sand, on which they can erect such a mighty Fabrick of Prayers and Vows, and Altars and Temples: And though it has stood for many Ages, whilst no Wind or Whisper, nor the least Breath of Air against it was stirring; yet it begins to sink, and is sinking apace; and (we hope in God) it will soon disappear. I am sure our Saviour by his Words and his Actions, has given no Encouragement to such prophane Expressions, and idolatrous Practices; but has taken all Care, and imaginable Caution, to hinder us from thinking of her too highly, or more highly than
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we ought. And though some Christians have used her, as the *Jews* would have used our Saviour, and have taken her by Force, and have made her a Queen against her Will ; yet she is ashamed of the Honour ; and the Crown they have given her, is as painful and grievous, as that of Thorns was to our Saviour : And the Knee they bow to her, and their *Ave Maria*, and their *Hail Queen of Heaven*, is not only an Abuse of the Virgin, but Blasphemy.

It may possibly be enquired, to what End or Purpose is all this Discourse, when our Fear is past, and the Danger is over, and we have no Apprehension those Things should return, or any more be established ? I pray God they may not ! But though we are past all Sense of Danger, I hope we are not past all Sense of Gratitude. It is natural for Men, and almost unavoidable, when after a dreadful Storm, or Tempest, they are got to Shore, to make a Stand, and look behind them a while, and observe what great Danger they had lately escaped, and with Eyes and Hands lifted up to Heaven,

Heaven, to thank and bleſs God for their happy Deliverance : And not only ſo ; but if they ſee others amidſt the ſtormy Winds and Tempeſts, yet toiling, and labouring, and ready every Hour and every Moment to periſh, to wiſh, and pray too, for their happy Deliverance. That God would hear ours and their Cry, in their Trouble, and be pleaſed to deliver them out of their Diſtreſs : That he would make the ſtormy Wind to ceaſe, and bring them into the Haven (where I hope they would, or) where they ſhould be to the Boſom of the moſt Primitive and moſt Apoſtolic, to the Communion of the pureſt Church in Chriſtendom : I ſhall pray for them and us, in one of her Collects.

GRANT, O Lord, we beſeech thee, that the Courſe of this World may be ſo peaceably ordered by thy Governance, that thy Church may joyfully ſerve thee, in all Godly Quietneſs ; through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord ; To whom with the Father, and the bleſſed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory.

THE

*THE Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the Love of God, and the
Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be
with us all evermore. Amen.*



SERMON



SERMON VII.

JOHN ii. 11.

This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory; and his Disciples believed on him.



IN speaking to this Miracle I proposed to discourse on these four Particulars.

I. The Virgin *Mary's* Words to our Saviour.

II. OUR Saviour's Answer to the Virgin *Mary*.

VOL. I.

I

III. THE

III. THE Miracle itself. And

IV. THE Effect of the Miracle. *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory, and his Disciples believed on him.*

I HAVE done with the First and Second, and proceed now to the Third, the Miracle itself; which we have here related exactly and punctually, and with all Manner of Circumstances, as (possibly) because it was the First, or the Beginning of our Saviour's Miracles, and because it was not mentioned by any other Evangelist.

THERE were set, (says the Text,) or there stood, or were standing, six Water-Pots, or Cisterns, so large, as to contain two or three Firkins a-piece; and, because it is not probable, that so large, and so many were set in every private House, and every poor and small Family; and this was certainly none of the richest, or the greatest Families; it is the Opinion of learned Men, that the Place where the Marriage Feast was celebrated, was some publick Room, or perhaps upper Chamber adjoining, or at least very near the Synagogue :

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gague : And when these Water-Pots, or Cisterns, were now almost empty by the frequent drawing, or pouring out Water, not only for the Washing of their Hands, but of their Cups, and Vessels, and all other Utenfils, our Saviour commands the Servants to fill them again with Water. And though, possibly, they might wonder at so strange a Command, and could not imagine what should be his Meaning or Intention ; yet, having received a Charge from the Virgin *Mary*, who had certainly some Concern and Interest in the Marriage, they filled them up to the Brim ; our Saviour all the while doing nothing, only speaking a Word, and, as it seems, not so much as rising from Table, that it might not be thought he had dealt with the Servants, or combined with the Waiters, or that he had used any Manner of Artifice. And, as soon as the Servants had acquainted our Saviour, they had obey'd his Command, without so much as first trying or tasting it himself, to see whether it were Wine, as being assured of his Power, and not doubting the Miracle ; he bids them, *Draw out now, and bear it to the Governor ;* who was usually some grave and sober Person, and very probably, as some have conjectur'd, a Priest. And, if a Priest, I would add another Conjecture, the Priest that per-

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form'd the Office of Marriage ; whose Business it was to carve, and give the Blessing, to over-see the Guests, and regulate their Behaviour ; to prevent all Disorder, Excess, and Intemperance, and foolish Talking and Jestings, which are not convenient : Who, when he *had tasted the Water that was made Wine, and knew not whence it was,* though *the Servants who drew the Water knew,* but had not said any Thing to the Governor, and, perhaps, knew not themselves it was turn'd into Wine, calls to the Bridegroom, and tells him, *That all others do set forth the good Wine at the Beginning, and when Men have well drank, then that which is worse,* the smaller and weaker ; but he had *kept the good,* the more noble and generous, the best *Wine, until now,* to theirs, and no less to his own Admiration ; who could not but wonder, and be mightily satisfied ; when he was afraid of being asham'd and disgraced, he should come off with Honour, and be praised and commended. This is the plain and full Account of the Miracle ; and it may seem another, that we have no Account of the Guests or the Governor, and of their Conviction. They could hardly forbear out of mere Curiosity, to make some Enquiry, both of the Bridegroom and Servants: And the Bridegroom knew nothing
any

SERMON VII. 117

any more than themselves ; and the Servants as little, but only that they had filled all the Vessels with Water, at the Command of a Guest that was there, and to them a mere Stranger. And it is not unlikely, but that some of the Company, and the Governor himself, upon so strange an Accident, might rise from the Table, and go to the Cisterns, and taste the Wine there for their own Satisfaction. Nay, and seeing they were all Brim-full, to try them all, and to taste of every Vessel ; and, being assured by the Servants and Attendants, it was just now but all Water : Tho' they must needs be astonished, yet we do not read, that the Guests or the Governor were convinced and converted by so great a Miracle. They might talk of it a while, and it might serve for Discourse ; but, like the other Miracle of the multiplied Loaves, it does not seem to have left any Impression ; and the Loaves and the Wine too, were quickly forgotten. But whatever Effect it had on others, it had a good Effect on the Disciples ; for it is said, *They believed* ; that is, they believe that our Saviour was the Christ the Son of God, or the *Messiah*.

IV. THE Fourth and Last Particular :
This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in
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Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory; and his Disciples believed on him.

Who those Disciples were, we read in the foregoing Chapter: Two of them were Disciples of St. *John* the Baptist, one of which is not named; and is thought by most Writers to be St. *John* the Evangelist, by his relating all those Passages so exactly; and whose Manner it was, and perhaps his Modesty, not to mention himself. The other was *Andrew*, who called his Brother *Simon*; and *Philip*, who alone was call'd by our Saviour; and *Nathaniel*, who was called by *Philip*: And all of them, very likely, had been Followers or Hearers of St. *John* the Baptist. With these five Disciples our Saviour goes to the Marriage; and probably with some Design and Intention, as may be seen by the Words of the Virgin *Mary*, to shew forth his Power, and manifest his Glory; to confirm his new Disciples in the good Opinion they had already conceived of him, in a stronger Persuasion, and a firmer Belief that he was the *Messiah*: For though they had been with him a Day or two before, and had stay'd with him, and heard his divine Discourses; though he had told *Simon*, both his Name and his Family, and had given him another Name, that of *Cephas*, or *Peter*; and though he had

had told *Nathaniel*, he saw him under the Fig-Tree, before *Philip* call'd him ; and *Nathaniel*, convinced even by that little Miracle, had own'd and declared he was *the Son of God*, and *the King of Israel* ; yet our Saviour resolv'd he would give them now all together, a clearer Proof, and a fuller Assurance, that he was (as they hoped, and thought him to be) the true and real *Messiah* ; of which he knew there could be no better Evidence, than a plain, easy, and undoubted Miracle, not difficultly wrought, nor hard to be understood ; but such as at once should both please and astonish : Like the best Thoughts, and the noblest Conceptions, that, at the same Time, are easy and wonderful. And for this he takes the very first Opportunity ; and, not when in private, or alone by themselves, but at a publick Meeting, at a Marriage Feast, where they might have the Testimony, both of their own, and other Men's Senses. And though our Saviour might well hope and expect, that so great a Miracle should have had some Influence on others, though Strangers, yet he design'd it chiefly to convince his Disciples, and for their Satisfaction. *This Beginning of Miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his Glory ; and his Disciples believed on him.*

HAVING thus explain'd and enlarged on the Miracle, with the chief Circumstances, I shall spend the Remainder of this Time in some useful and practical Inferences ; that we may not, like the Guests that came to this Marriage, behold a great Miracle, and so go away, and be never the better, and not at all edify'd.

1. FIRST then I shall observe, The Reasonableness of the Disciples, in Believing our Saviour on the Account of this Miracle.

2. SECONDLY, The Unreasonableness of the *Jews* in not believing our Saviour on the Account of this, and of his many other Miracles.

3. AND Thirdly, The Unreasonableness of those, who now deny or question the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles.

1. FIRST, The Reasonableness of the Disciples in believing our Saviour, on the Account of this Miracle. For though he wrought many more and greater, in the Course of his Ministry, to secure and establish or increase their Faith ; yet this was
enough

enough for the present, and might very well serve for a Ground of Believing. He wrought it before them with the greatest Facility ; without any Charm, like the Magicians or Sorcerers ; or using any mystical or strange unintelligible Words of Enchantment. And, as he wrought it with Ease, so he wrought it with the greatest Silence and Modesty, and almost secretly, as secretly as possible ; and seemed to conceal, even whilst he was manifesting *forth his Glory*. And they could not imagine, that so meek and humble, so pious, so devout, and so holy a Person as they found him, in the short and private Conversation they had with him, should have any Intent to deceive ; or if he had, or could have had such a Design, that God would countenance or favour him in it, and assist the Deceit : They knew as well, as the blind Man in the Gospel, (for it is a natural Notion,) *That God heareth not Sinners* : And of all Sinners, that he least heareth Deceivers and Impostors. Were such permitted to work as great Miracles, as their own true Prophets, the Kingdom of Heaven would be divided against itself, and never stand ; but have an End, as soon as it had a Beginning. And though, perhaps, one single Miracle might not be sufficient to have proved our Saviour to be, indeed,
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the *Messiah* ; yet, having promised them greater Things before, and that they should *see the Heavens opened, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man* ; this was enough, and a very fair Beginning, to make them believe, and become his Disciples. And had they not been so far convinced by this Miracle, as to stay with him ; but had gone away, (as did many others, upon some little Offence or Exception,) and had went no more after him, they had never been Apostles.

2. BUT Secondly, As the Disciples acted very wisely and reasonably, in believing our Saviour, on the Account of this Miracle ;

So the *Jews* acted very foolishly and unreasonably, in not believing, on the Account of this, and many more and greater Miracles.

I SHALL not at present, and I need not insist on the divine Authority of the Holy Gospel. It is enough for the Purpose, if it be but allow'd the Credit of a true and faithful History. And, I am sure, there was never since the World began, any History, not only antient, but modern,

dern, received upon better, or so good Grounds and Reasons ; or has been all Kind of Ways so fully attested.

Now, in this we read, that our blessed Saviour wrought several Miracles, in the Towns and Villages of *Judea* and *Gallilee* ; in the City of *Jerusalem*, in the open Streets, and the publick Synagogues ; that he healed all Manner of Diseases and Infirmities ; made the Dumb to speak, and the Deaf to hear, the Lame to walk, and the Dead to arise. And, tho' he wrought, indeed, many more Miracles than are written in this Book ; yet those that are written, are more than the Time will allow me to repeat. Now, how is it possible the *Jews* should ever question so many plain, evident, and ocular Demonstrations ? Unless our Saviour, instead of restoring, had taken away, and, at the same Time, deprived them of their Senses : Unless he had wrought one of *Elisha's* Miracles ; and, instead of giving Sight to so many, had smitten all the People with Blindness. There are several Reasons that have been usually assign'd for this strange Incredulity ; but may all be reduced to these two in general : In the common People, their implicit Faith in their Guides and Rulers ; and in their
Guides

Guides and Rulers, their worldly Interest. *Have any of the chief Priests or Pharisees believed on him?* was such a Question, as the People could not, or durst not answer. And, tho' even some among the chief Rulers believed on him, yet they did not confess him, because of the *Pharisees*, and for fear they should be put out of the Synagogue; *For they loved the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God.* And this was the Case both of the Priests, and the People. And when this is the Case of any Priests or People, what can be the Consequence? When the Priests bear Rule by those Means, and the People love to have it so, what can be the End, but the most stupid and resolved Infidelity? And, that we may not think this so very strange and wonderful, we have an Instance of it, and have had for many Ages, in a greater Church than that of the *Jews*; where the People believe against all their Senses; and the Priests believe nothing against their Interest. We are told, indeed, of a great many Miracles; and some, for the Proof of a very strange Doctrine, that needs it most of any; and yet is not capable of being proved by a Miracle. For let us suppose the Truth of their Legends; and that a Child (as they say) has appeared upon
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the Altar, at the Time of Mass : And let us suppose too, as they imagine, the Child that appeared there was Christ himself ; how do they prove this strange Apparition ? They saw it plainly. And saw they not as plainly the Bread or Wafer ? Unless they will tell us, he appeared on the Altar ; but appeared there, indeed, in the Form of a Wafer. But is it not strange that Men must believe their Eyes in one Instance, and not in a thousand ? By the Way, this Miracle is very absurd ; and, supposing it true, is very improper : For why should our Saviour appear on the Altar, at the Time of Mass, which they will needs have a Sacrifice in the Form of a Child ? For was he crucified in his Childhood or Infancy ? This had been proper, if our Saviour had suffer'd under *Herod*, and not under *Pontius Pilate*. If Men must believe they receive the same Body, that hung on the Cross, he should not have appeared as a Child, but a Man in his full Growth and Stature. But this was a Miracle a little unwieldy, and not so easily managed. And, therefore, they would do well to take Care for the Future to lay their Stories more wisely together. There is nothing in the World that has done more Mischief to the Cause of Christianity, than these
lying

lying Wonders: Yet, notwithstanding these, and all other Objections, there is no Reason in the World, why Men should deny, or question the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles.

3. THE Third and last Inference: Of which as briefly as possible.

THE Reason why Men either doubt, or deny our Saviour's Miracles, must (I conceive) be one of these three Pretences.

1. EITHER, That the Actions ascribed to our Saviour, were no real Miracles:

2. OR, if they were, that they were not performed by the Power of God, but of some evil Spirit:

3. OR that the Account we have of these Miracles, and the Relation itself, is not true or credible.

THE First was the Pretence of some ancient Heathens.

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THE Second, of the *Jews*, or the Scribes and Pharisees.

AND the Third, of our modern Deists or Atheists.

I shall crave Leave to invert the Order, and begin with the last, as of greatest Concern ; and on which depends the Force of the other; for if this be answer'd, they follow of Course, and scarce need to be answer'd.

Now I would only ask of such Persons, as doubt or deny our Saviour's Miracles, whether it be possible to be assured or satisfied in the Truth and Certainty of any Matters of Fact, that passed in the World, either Five hundred, or a Thousand, or Two thousand Years ago? If they say it is impossible, they must then reject not only all Histories, but Records and Chronicles; and destroy all Writings, and all the Books in the World, like *Goths* and *Vandals*. They may tell us, if they please too, there were never such a People, as *Goths* and *Vandals*: And they are the first that ever professed and own'd such rude and barbarous Ignorance. But
if

if for Shame they will, and must allow, and cannot deny, but that the Transactions of former Ages may be preserved, and delivered down to Posterity, and with such Marks and evident Characters of their being true, as cannot be suspected; there is then no questioning, or doubting of the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles.

THE History of them has been now continued almost seventeen hundred Years; and has been received too in almost all Nations, and almost all Languages; and without Interruption in any one Age, since the first Publication.

IF they tell us here, that so has the Alcoran above a thousand Years; the Answer is easy; and they have been told it already a thousand Times; and they see it themselves, and perceive the Weakness of their own Objection, That all that Religion is plainly adapted to the Lusts and Passions of human Nature; to sensual Pleasures; and not only in this World too, but the other. And though one would think there were no need of Violence to establish, or propagate such an easy, carnal, and sensual Religion; yet

yet was it at first, and is still promoted, by the Force of Arms; and without the Presence of so much as one single Miracle. Whereas the Gospel is plainly a Religion directly opposite to all vile Affections; to Lasciviousness and Wantonness; to every Iniquity; to all sinful Lusts, both of the Flesh and the Spirit: And yet was it so far from being assisted or promoted by Force, that it obtain'd and prevail'd, not only without, but even against all the Power in the World, all the Wit and Malice, the Rage and Violence; and by nothing in the World, but its own clear and invincible Evidence. And however Men love to argue and cavil, it is plainly incredible, and utterly impossible, if it had not at first been true and certain, and that too unquestionably, and that too infallibly, it could ever have been received or credited.

2. AND as for the Cavil of some antient Heathens, in denying, or rather in lessening and disparaging our Saviour's Miracles, as trifling Actions, they are such, I am certain, that our modern Atheists (though as bold as any of the antient Heathens) will not deny to be really Miracles.

3. AND the Cavil of the *Jews*, or the Scribes and Pharisees, was yet more absurd ; *That he cast out Devils, by the Power of the Devil* : So weak an Argument, as though he had put it into the Minds and Mouths of the Scribes and Pharisees ; yet was ashamed of it himself, and own'd the quite contrary.

THE only Application I shall make of the present, and the former Discourses on this excellent Subject, shall be to thank God, and bless his holy Name, for having given us such abundant Assurance, such a full, perfect, and compleat Satisfaction, of the Truth and Certainty of our Holy Religion. And since he has not left himself without Witness, all manner, all possible kind of Testimony, he has left us, if we do not believe, without Excuse.

I THANK God (and I hope I speak the Mind too of many others) I do as firmly believe our Saviour's Miracles, as had I been present, had I seen them with my Eyes, had he restored my Sight, and had been the Object of one of his Miracles. And I do as firmly believe, (and so I hope

hope too, do others,) that as he raised those who are mention'd in the Gospel, and himself from the Dead, he will raise us also: And as at the Marriage at *Cana in Galilee*, he turned Water into Wine, by a greater Miracle he will change our vile and mortal Bodies, even into immortal and glorified Bodies; and when the Marriage of the Lamb is come, we shall drink of that new, that ineffable Wine in his Father's Kingdom: And (to use the Words of the Spirit,) *Blessed are they which shall be called to that Marriage.* I shall end all with a very good Collect, and there cannot be a better, or a fitter Conclusion to these Discourses.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning; grant that we may in suchwise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of thy Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the Blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ: To whom with the Father, and the blessed Spirit, be all

*Honour and Glory. And the Grace
of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the
Love of God, and the Fellowship of
the Holy Ghost, be with us all ever-
more.*



SERMON



SERMON VIII.

JOHN. ii. 13, 14, &c.

*And the Jews Passover was at hand, and
Jesus went up to Jerusalem:*

*And found in the Temple, those that sold
Oxen, and Sheep, and Doves, and the
Changers of Money sitting.*

*And when he had made a Scourge of small
Cords, he drove them all out of the
Temple, &c.*



O U may possibly remem-
ber, that I have proposed
to discourse on some of our
Saviour's Miracles : And
there being no Scarcity
of them, but great Plen-
ty and Abundance, it may perhaps be en-
quired, why this Action of our Saviour,
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should be peculiarly selected, and looked upon as a Miracle.

To which I shall briefly answer, with a very antient, learned, and pious Father of the Church. “ Many (says he) admire the other Works of our Saviour, as his making the Blind to see, the “ Lame to walk, the Deaf to hear, and “ the Dumb to speak ; but to me (says he) “ there is nothing more strange and wonderful, than that a single Person, whose “ outward Appearance and bodily Presence was mean and contemptible, with “ a Scourge of small Cords, should drive “ before him so vast a Multitude of Buyers, “ and Sellers ; some Hundreds, perhaps “ Thousands, and make them all quietly “ depart the Temple, without any Disturbance, or the least Sign of Resistance. “ A Work that had not been done so easily, “ by a Band of Soldiers or the whole Roman Garrison.”

AND, therefore, it may well and very justly be reckon'd among our Saviour's Miracles : And I shall treat on it, not only for the Greatness of the Action, but as it affords us many useful and profitable Instructions.

AND

I. AND the First is in the Entrance of it :
Our Saviour's Example, in going up to
Jerusalem, at the Feast of the Pas-
sover.

FOR as he went to *Jordan* among a
Croud of People, confessing their Sins, tho'
he had no Sins to confess ; and was there
baptized, though he had no need of Bap-
tism, and had no Sin at all, not so much
as the Stain of Original Sin, to be wash'd
away ; and as too he fasted, though he had
no need of fasting, and had no Passions or in-
ordinate Affections to be subdued or morti-
fied ; so here he goes up with the rest of
the People to the Feast of the Passover,
though, the Feast being in great Measure
appointed and instituted for his sake and
Honour, and being a Type of himself, and
a greater than *Moses* was here, he might
very well seem to have been excused and
exempted : But he who came to fulfil all
Righteousness, was ready to obey all pious
Rites and divine Institutions, leaving us an
Example, that we should follow his Steps, in
whom, as there was no Guile or Deceit, so
was there no Pride, no Perverseness, or
Obstinacy. Which should teach us all to
have more Regard than we usually have,
both for the Church's Fasts and Festivals.

We have here our Lord going up to *Jerusalem* at the Feast of the Passover ; and yet we have Christians, who, though Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, either keep not the Feast, out of perfect Prophaneness, or keep it with the old Leaven of Superstition, or with the new Leaven of Malice and Wickedness. There is hardly any Day set a-part in Honour of our blessed Saviour, that deserves to be more devoutly and religiously observed, than the Day of his Passion ; the truest Rubrick in the whole Church's Calendar ; and yet there is hardly any Day more neglected : And though Men do not, indeed, bring their Sheep and Oxen, and their Tables of Money-Changing into the Temple ; yet neither do they go thither themselves. Instead of Fasting, and Prayer, and Devotion, they have made it a Day of Trading and Merchandize ; and were our Saviour on Earth, he would have now more Occasion of shewing another and quite contrary Miracle ; and scourge the prophane Buyers and Sellers from their Stalls and Markets, and drive them into the Temple. But this, by the Way, I could not but mention, though I have little Hopes of reforming so great and general an Abuse ; and shall, therefore, only wish that all Persons of more Leisure, and of more Religion, would keep the great Day
of

of our Saviour's Passion with Fasting and Praying, and fill up what is wanting in other's Devotion.

No sooner was our Saviour enter'd *Jerusalem*, but he proceeded to the Temple ; and in the Court of the Gentiles, instead of finding the Gentile Converts praying and worshipping, he finds the *Jews* themselves trading and trafficking, buying and selling, and changing of Money, as though it was not Part of the Temple, but a Fair or a Market, a Burse or Exchange. Such is the Nature of Avarice, it takes all Opportunities, and watches all Occasions of Profit or Advantage : It turns the Temple itself to a Corban, whereby God himself shall not be profited; makes a Gain of Godliness, and sets even Religion to Sale, and puts it out to Use and Interest. The most pious Rites, and the wisest Institutions, cannot escape it ; 'tis the Root of all Evil ; of Evils, though never so cross and contradictory ; and Covetousness is Sacrilege, no less than Idolatry.

THE Occasion of this great Abuse and Prophaneness was briefly this : The People were directed by the Law of *Moses*, both *Jews* and Profelytes, who lived at a Distance, to save the Charge and Trouble of bringing

bringing their Sacrifices so far, to buy their Sacrifices at the Place which God should choose for his Worship, to place his Name there, which was at *Jerusalem*: And, tho' some other Part of the City might have served as well, yet the Priests and Levites who had Charge of the Temple, upon some wise and weighty Considerations thereunto moving, and making the People pay for their Standings, had assign'd the outward Court of the Gentiles, for this Use and Service. The Pretence, indeed, was fair and plausible, as a Place of any the most convenient for the Priests and the People, as being near to the Temple; and where the Priests might the better examine the Sacrifices, and inspect them before they were sold to the People, whether they were all without Spot or Blemish, and such as the Law of *Moses* required.

THESE were their Reasons, and they had no better, to conceal their Avarice, and excuse their Prophaneness. But our blessed Saviour, to whom no Sin was ever more hateful and detestable than Hypocrisy, especially in those who professed, and pretended, and ought to be Examples of Piety and Holiness, could not bear such Abuses: Even his meek Spirit was moved with Passion, and provoked to Indignation: And, though

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though he could forgive any Wrongs or Injuries that were offered his Person, and could suffer himself to be spit upon, and sold; yet he could not endure the Temple of God to be defiled and polluted, and his Father's House made an House of Merchandize: He knew well, indeed, how to be angry, and yet not sin; and yet knew it was a Sin here, not to be angry.

A FAIR Instruction, and sufficient Authority, for the Servants of Christ, and especially his Ministers, to shew the greatest Zeal and Concern for the Honour of God, and his most holy Religion. The Affronts and Abuses that are offered themselves they may scorn and despise, or pity and forgive; but they may not, they cannot see God dishonoured, and his Name blasphem'd; they must not suffer the Gospel of Christ, and its sacred Mysteries, to be reduced to nothing but natural Religion; and the inward Temple, and the Holy of Holies, made a Court of the Gentiles. *Will a Man rob God*, says the Prophet *Malachy*, *though but in Tythes and Offerings*? But what is this in comparison to the robbing God of his very Divinity? to making his House, which he design'd an House of Prayer, a Den of Thieves to all Nations? It is observeable
that

that our Saviour, in the whole Deportment, and all the Actions of his Life, never appear'd so transported, as twice he appear'd upon this very Occasion, both in the Entrance, and the Close of his Ministry. As it was one of the first he wrought in Publick; so was it one of the last and concluding Miracles: And considering his mild and gentle Disposition, seem'd so strange to his Disciples, they had Recourse to the Scripture, and thought he was only fulfilling a Prophecy. They remember'd it was written, *The Zeal of thine House hath eaten me up*, hath spent, hath wasted, hath exhausted my Spirits. It was spoken by *David* out of great Zeal for the House of God, and his Worship and Service; and was well applied and becoming our Saviour, both as the Son of God, and the Son of *David*.

BUT though our Lord was very justly provoked at the Sight of so great Abuse and Prophaneness; yet he suffered not his Anger, and his just Displeasure, to fly out into any extravagant Passion: He rebukes them but gently; and though *he came* (to use the Apostle's Expression) *with a Rod*, yet he came too with a Spirit of Meekness: For seeing on the Ground some broken Pieces of Cords, that had been used about their Beasts and Sacrifices, and were much fitter

fitter to be used on themselves, and taking them up in his Hand, and yet, for ought appears, without so much as striking any one Person, he drives them before him, all out of the Temple; and they too, in Haste, their Sheep and Oxen: And had he not overturn'd them, the Money-Changers with Fear and Trembling, had been ready themselves to overturn their own Tables. A learned Writer, in his Notes and Comments on this Passage, has quoted an antient Opinion, which yet he rejects: "That, at this Time, there
 " appeared in the Looks of our Saviour,
 " such a wonderous Glory, and so mighty
 " a Splendor, as the Priests and People
 " were amaz'd and dazzled; and not only at
 " the Sight of his Rod, but fled away at
 " the Brightness of his Presence; such as
 " that, which appeared in the Face of *Moses*,
 " when he came down from the Mount,
 " and the People were not able to bear
 " the Brightness of his Countenance." But this that learned and judicious Writer has wisely laid aside, and cast a Veil over it, as having no Foundation in Scripture. And it is not likely that our Saviour's Disciples, who were with him in the Mount, and related so exactly all the Particulars of that Transfiguration, should say nothing of this, when of that there were only two or three, and of this, perhaps, two or three thousand Witnesses.

nesses. And, therefore, it is better without such Suppositions, to take the Scripture as it is, and conceive our Saviour without any Rays or Beams of Glory, in his own human and natural Appearance : And the Wonder was greater, that so plain a Person in the Shape of a Man, and with a little Rod, should drive them out of the Temple, than had he appear'd with a Flaming Sword in the Form of an Angel. It was therefore, sure, very idle and impertinent in the *Jews* to question his Power and Authority ; or to ask, *What Sign or Wonder shewest thou, that thou dost these Things?* when the Thing itself was a Sign and a Miracle. And our Saviour seems to have thought them impertinent by the Answer he gives, which, though much to his, was little to their Purpose ; and yet such as their idle Question deserved, *Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up again* ; which they understood (and so he let them understand it, as deserving no better) of that material Temple ; which yet he meant of the Temple of his Body ; and which, all Things considered, in that Sense too, was no less a Miracle : And yet when wrought, and they could not deny, they endeavoured to conceal ; and, though they knew it, yet would not believe, till our Lord came again in a more terrible Manner,

ner, and drove them all out of the Temple for ever, and laid it with the Ground; and all the Wit and Malice, and the Art and Industry of *Jews* and Gentiles, have never been able to raise it again.

BUT now, besides, that this memorable Action of our Saviour in itself, was great and wonderful, it affords us many useful and profitable Instructions; and may serve in like Cases to regulate both our Opinion and Practice.

IT may teach us to avoid the *Jews* Superciliousness, their proud Scorn of all others. It was a strange Contempt they had of the Gentiles, to take their Place of Worship, and turn it into Stalls and Stables for Cattle; as though they thought them no better than the Beasts that perish, or no better, at least, than the Beasts they sacrificed: And yet this was ever their Humour, and is too the Nature of all proud People, not only to slight and despise, but to vex and affront, to grieve and spight those whom they scorn and contemn. It is true, indeed, God had highly favoured and honoured the People of the *Jews*, above all other Nations; and theirs were the Fathers, and theirs were the Oracles, and theirs were the Promises, and theirs was the Covenant;
but

but not with Intent that they should be proud, and deceitful, and arrogant; but humble, and thankful, and ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, and let others partake of the same Graces and Benefits. And 'it was a strange Way of obliging the Gentiles to have any good Thoughts, either of them, or their Religion, by treating them with so little Respect or Regard, by ranking them with Beasts, (and to increase the Affront,) perhaps some of those Beasts they had formerly worshipped: But it was not only the Fault of the *Jews*; I fear it has been a little too common with Christians, to scorn and despise, and condemn all others that are not of their Church and Communion; to look upon them, as no better than Heathens, and hardly allow them to be good or true Christians. This is peculiarly the Mark and Character of one of the worst, (the most superstitious, and the most idolatrous,) and I should be sorry to see it come into the Character of one of the best Churches in Christendom.

St. *Paul*, who seems of all the Apostles to have the greatest Zeal, had the greatest Charity, and he advises *not to judge those that are without*; and again, *not to judge another's Servant*; and especially too when he

he declares and professes to own the same Lord, and serve the same Master. I speak not this in the least to abate your Zeal and Concern for our own Constitution: It is certainly the best, and undoubtedly the purest, and the most perfect of any this Day in Christendom: But the truest Use, and the properest Inference, and the right Application, we should make of this Article we so firmly believe, is, to take all Care, since we have the best Church, to be the best Christians: *That we add* (to use the Apostle's Expression) *to our Faith, Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and Meekness, and Kindness, and brotherly Charity:* Or, if I may use my own Words again, since we have the best Church, that we be the best Christians.

AND as we may learn by this Action of our Saviour, to beware of the *Jewish* Pride and Conceit; so to beware of their Avarice: And in both his Reproofs, our Saviour seems to strike at this Sin more expressly: *Make not my Father's House, an House of Merchandize:* And, *My House shall be called the House of Prayer; but ye have made it a Den of Thieves.* It was not so much defiled and prophaned by their foul Beasts and Cattle, as their fordid Gain, and their more filthy Lucre. And this too,

no less than Pride and Arrogance, was the Sin of the *Jews*, and was ever observed to be their Spirit and Genius; and as though it were the original Sin of that Nation, has been derived through all Ages, to all their Posterity. No People in the World ever served *Mammon*, like the only People of the God of *Israel*: But their Sin here was greater in turning his House into a House of Merchandize, and making their God himself to serve *Mammon*.

AND yet here I could wish, as in the former Particular, this were only the Sin of the *Jewish* People: But I fear it has spread too much among Christians; and many who cry the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, do only mean the Temple of the Goddess *Diana*, whom, as once all *Asia*, so they, and almost all *Europe* at this Day do worship. And of this, as indeed of all other Corruptions, no Church in the World was ever so guilty without Shame or Blushing, as that which will needs be the only and Catholick. There is hardly one Doctrine of the Christian Religion, but they have turned into Profit, and took every Article, and melted it down, and coined it again, and stamped it anew, with their own Image and Superscription; and therefore that Saying of one of their Holinesses,

nesses, *Quantas nobis Divitias comparavit hæc Fabula Christi ! What a World of Riches have we got by this Story, or Fable, of Christ !* was as false as prophane : It was not the Story, the true Story of Christ, but their own Fables and Legends that brought them such a Mass of Wealth and Treasure : But if it were a Fault in the *Jews*, to suffer the Merchants and Money-Changeers to enter the outward Court of the Temple, what a Crime had it been ? what a Sight to behold the High-Priest himself, in his Mitre and Ephod, with his Breast-Plate and his infallible *Urim* and *Thummim*, sitting in the Sanctuary, and making a Table of the very Altar itself, and telling of Money, and selling the Law, and the Ark of the Covenant ?

THERE are many other very useful and profitable Instructions, this Action of our Saviour affords ; but I shall mention but one, and though the most obvious, yet as useful as any ; and that is, the due Regard and Reverence we should pay to the House of God, and the Honour we owe to the Place where his Honour dwelleth.

I CONFESS, indeed, as to this Particular we seem of late Years (and God be thanked for it) to be a little reformed. Time was,

and not beyond some Mens Memories, when a strange, rude, and undecent Behaviour in the Church was esteem'd a Part of Religion; and Men thought they were bound in the House of God to be cover'd, not because of the Angels, but because they thought themselves Saints and Angels. But, God be praised, the Church has now no such Custom; and People shew, in this Place, more Manners and good Breeding, however, and, perhaps, very often a little too much good Breeding and Civility, and are more intent, and seem more concerned to pay their due Regards and Respects (I had almost said their Devotions) to one another, than to God almighty. But let us suppose we were only in the Presence of an earthly Prince, to whom we had an humble Suit and Petition of the greatest Concern, on which depended our Lives and Fortunes, our Estates and Honours, and all our Safety and Happiness; would it not look very strange and unseemly, when we come into his Sight, forgetting his Presence, to be gazing about, and paying our Homage, and making our Court to his Servants and Followers, and (perhaps too) none of his Servants and Followers, but such Strangers as we, and all poor Petitioners; and teaching them too the same Misbehaviour, and forgetting him, to return our Civilities?

Now

Now *these Things* (to use the Apostle's Expression) *I have in a Figure transferred to ourselves*, and they shew us our Duty, and how we ought to behave ourselves in the Sanctuary.

AND if this be not a Place of Gazing, it is less of idle and foolish Talking, which here, sure, if any where, is not convenient. I shall not dispute the perfect Illegality; but if it be lawful, yet it is not expedient; and if it be lawful, yet it does not edify. It diverts our Thoughts, and hinders our Attention, and often too loses many a good Prayer, and spoils our Devotion. And let none in this think to excuse themselves, by the Example of others: It is not to be excused or justified by any; and the greater, and the better, the worse the Example. But though we thus speak, we are yet persuaded, and not only persuaded better Things of you, but see better Things daily: And, perhaps, few such Places can shew a more decent, a more grave, serious, and pious Behaviour.

LET us all therefore, as I hope we do always, when we come to this Place, think where we are going; and when we are here, think what we are doing; and set a Watch before the Doors of our Lips, and those of

our Ears, and make a Covenant with our Eyes, that we neither behold, nor talk, nor listen to Vanity.

AND if we thus humbly and devoutly serve God in this World, this outward Court of his Temple, we shall at length be admitted into the Holy of Holies, where nothing within us, and nothing without us, nothing we see and nothing we hear, will hinder, but all improve our Devotion; and where we shall meet too, with many of those with whom we had often walked to the House of God as Friends; and shall bless them, and bless ourselves, and bless God for his infinite Goodness in bringing us thither, and praise and adore him to all Eternity.

AND God vouchsafe of his infinite Goodness to bring us all thither, for the sake of Christ Jesus: To whom, with the Father, and the Blessed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, now, and for ever. Amen.



SERMON IX.

LUKE v. 8, 9.

*When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down
at Jesus Knees, saying, Depart from me,
for I am a sinful Man, O Lord.*

*For he was astonished, and all that were
with him, at the Draught of the Fishes
which they had taken.*



N treating on the Miracles of
our blessed Saviour, I should
not have thought it necessary
to insist on this, as (perhaps)
one of the least and meanest
of his Miracles, and there be-
ing so many greater and much more confi-
derable, but that I find it extolled and
L 4 mightily

mightily improved by some of the *Romish* Writers; and, like *St. Peter's Net*, so full of other Miracles, it is ready to break again; and of a Miracle, is almost turned into a Parable: But it is the peculiar Felicity of those who believe the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, not to see what all Men see, and to see what no Body can see but themselves. An indifferent Person would hardly imagine that either *St. Peter's*, or the Pope's Supremacy, should have any Ground or Foundation in this Miracle; and yet they tell us it is plain; and they may tell us, if they please, that his Holiness's Chair was made out of the Reliques of this very Ship of *St. Peter*. And had those great Men, of such Fancy and Invention, been so happy as to have thought of it, I may safely engage it would have been believed and ador'd by the People. It were to no purpose to enquire, how it is possible that an old Piece of Timber, without rotting or decaying, should last so very long; when the Wood of the Cross has lasted now almost seventeen hundred Years, and been as strangely preserved; and not only lasted, but by as great a Miracle as that of the Loaves and Fishes, has increased and multiplied; and they have gathered of the broken Pieces and Fragments, not only enough to fill a few Baskets, but even Ships, and much larger than that

that of St. *Peter*. And, lest we should doubt of all this, they have five thousand Men, and five thousand Men more too, besides Women and Children, that can witness and attest to the Truth of this Miracle. And thus the Cross of Christ, and our most Holy Religion is made not only to the *Greeks* Foolishness, and to the *Jews* an Offence, but a Shame and Scandal to all good and wise Christians.

IN treating on this Miracle, I shall first give you the *Romish* Exposition, and not of the meanest, but most learned of their Writers; and then, that which not only the most learned, but the meanest Men alive (that are not of their Church, or even of no Church at all) would take to be the Sense and Intent of the Miracle.

As our Saviour was standing by the Sea of *Galilee*, and speaking to the People, he was at length so oppressed with the Croud and Multitude, that he could stand there no longer; and though he could easily and with Security have stepp'd into the Sea, and have stood on the Waters, (as he walked on them after,) and thence spoke to the People, yet having nothing in him, that looked like Ostentation, and not being lavish of his Miracles, which he never performed but
upon

upon some just Occasion, or real Necessity, he chose rather to descend from the Shore, and enter a Ship that lay near, and was empty: And this Ship either by Chance or Accident, or (if they will) by Providence, was *Simon Peter's*. But because our Saviour after his Resurrection appeared again to *St. Peter*, and wrought another like Miracle, in a wonderful Draught of Fishes; and all by the Hands and Ministry of *St. Peter*, they have thought fit for the strengthening the Argument and clearing it, to join both Miracles together; and in the first, they tell us, is plainly represented the Church Militant; and in the other, the Church Triumphant; for as in the first our Saviour does not command *St. Peter* to cast his Net, either only on the Right-Side of the Ship, or only on the Left, lest we should think that only good Men, or only bad Men are taken, or received into the Church Militant, but to let down his Net at large, and indifferently, and take in all that offered, or that came, both good and bad together; so, in the Second, he commands *St. Peter* to cast the Net on the Right-Side of the Ship, to shew, that none but good Men shall be taken or received into the Church Triumphant: And so again, as in the First, the Net was broken, and the Ship in Danger of sinking, which signifies

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nifies plainly, that Schisms and Heresies will arise in this World, and endanger the Ruin or Loss of the Church; so in the Second, the Net was not broken, nor the Ship in Danger of sinking; which shews as plainly, that in the other World, or the next Life, there will be no Schisms or Heresies. Yet farther, in the First there was no Account, or reckoning of the Number of Fish that was taken: But in the Second, they are all computed, even an Hundred and fifty-three, to shew us the certain and exact Number of the Saints in Heaven; and that none shall enter into that State, neither more nor less, but just the Number of God's Elect. Once more, and they have done: As in the First, the Fish were brought into the Ship, to shew the present Church's Estate, that it is yet in an uncertain and fluctuating Condition; so in the Second, they were drawn with the Net to Shore, and brought to firm Land, to shew the Stability, and the fixed Estate of the Saints in Glory.

AND now they wonder who does not perceive the Rights of St. *Peter*, his great Priviledge, Pre-eminence, and Authority! How on both Occasions he is most concerned, and first employ'd, and has the chief Management of both the Miracles; and,
next

next under Christ, and by his Command, he is in both the supreme Director and Governor : And by our Saviour's making use of his Ship, when there were yet many others, and choosing from thence to speak to the People, we are taught to learn, and are given to understand, that the true Holy Catholick Religion is no where taught, and no where to be found, but only in that Church, of which St. *Peter* is Owner and Governor.

I SHALL not abuse either your Patience, or Judgment in answering these Arguments. They are Men of a great inventive Faculty, and can find out Wonders in every Miracle, especially where St. *Peter* is concerned, or so much as mentioned. And yet, after all, if St. *Peter's* Supremacy were allowed or granted, it is a very wide Consequence, and a great Way from the Sea of *Galilee* to the River of *Tyber*.

BUT I shall rather choose to conclude this Discourse, and their learned Exposition, with another Miracle, and as like it as possible, and of their own inventing ; and, that we may not doubt too, a Miracle that happened, though very long ago, yet not very far off, in our own Nation, and near the Metropolis. When the Abby
Church

Church of St. *Peter* was built and finish'd, (the antient Place, as the Historian observes, of inaugurating our Princes,) the Night before the Day which St. *Melitus* the Bishop had appointed for the Consecration, St. *Peter* himself, in the Habit of a Stranger, appeared to a Fisherman, on the other Side of the River, and desired to be wafted over; and was no sooner set on Shore, but he entered the Church in the Sight of the Fisherman: And with him too entered a glorious Company of the heavenly Host, all bright and shining, and melodiously singing; and besides the sweet Melody, a wondrous Odour of inexpressible Fragrancy was shed abroad. As soon as all Things pertaining to the Dedication of the Church were performed, (I relate the Words of my Author,) the great Fisher of Men came back to the poor Fisher-Man; and in their Return he asks the poor Man if he had any Provision: Who assuring him indeed that he had taken nothing, St. *Peter*, in the very Words of our Saviour, bids him *let down his Nets*, and immediately his Nets enclosed, and were filled with a great Multitude of Fishes, the largest of which (taking the rest to himself,) he commands him the next Day to present to *Melitus*, with a Charge, that he should not presume to consecrate that Church, which himself had
confe-

consecrated already. *For I (says he) who speak unto thee, am Peter ; acquaint Melitus, therefore, with the Things which thou hast seen and heard, and the Signs yet remark'd on the Walls will confirm thy Speeches.* Accordingly, next Day, when the Church-Doors were opened, there appeared all the Signs and Marks of Consecration. On the Pavement were seen Letters and Inscriptions, both in *Greek* and *Latin* ; and the Walls were anointed with Holy Oil, and with many Signs of Crosses, and the Church every where yet moist with Aspersions. Upon which the good Bishop (with his Clergy and People) was so amaz'd and astonish'd, that he proceeded no farther, but render'd Thanks and Praise to God Almighty. *All these Particulars, says our great Church Historian, are attested by Authors of eminent Credit ; and again by Authors of the Prime Class ; and wonders how Protestants can look on these Things, as Dreams and Fables : They do so, indeed, but not as very cunningly, but as very foolishly devised Fables.* There is one Thing more they assert very positively, which, if true, is as strange, though it be not a Miracle, *That this Consecration was so firmly believed and so fully attested by Melitus himself, in a Synod at Rome, that they thought it sufficient ;*



ficient ; and so the Church of St. Peter had no other Consecration. St. Paul's Church, it seems, (as the same Author relates,) was built the same Year too, and no doubt too was consecrated ; and perhaps by Melitus, or some other Bishop, and that was enough for St. Paul's ; but St. Peter's must have the Honour to be consecrated by Saints and Angels.

I SHOULD beg your Pardon for detaining you so long with this idle Narration ; but it came in my Way so fully and directly, it could not well be avoided. And you plainly perceive it is borrow'd or stolen from our Saviour's Miracle : And it were well if this were the only Instance, in which they have robb'd, not only St. Paul, but our Saviour himself to enrich St. Peter.

HAVING thus given you the *Romish* Exposition, I proceed to that which, I conceive, any Person that is not prejudic'd, and has no Design to serve a Cause or a Party, would take to be the Sense and Intent of the Miracle : Which is plainly this. Our Saviour having ended his Discourse to the People, to confirm his Word, and to gain the more Credit to his Doctrine, thought fit to conclude with a Miracle ; and desires St. Peter to launch into the Deep, and let
down

down his Nets : And though he doubted it would be to no Purpose, having toiled all the Night in vain, and took nothing ; yet at our Saviour's Command he lets down the Nets, and enclosed so great a Number of Fishes, as they were ready to break : Upon which *Simon Peter*, and his Brother *Andrew*, called to their Partners in the other Ship to come to their Assistance. The Draught was so great, as they filled both the Ships, and so heavy loaded, as they were in Danger of sinking. *St. Peter* immediately with Fear and Trembling, threw himself down at our Saviour's Feet, and desires our Saviour to depart from so vile and sinful a Person ; but to allay his Fear, and for his Comfort and Encouragement, our Saviour tells him, he should henceforth catch Men : And then adds these Words, both to *Simon Peter* and *Andrew* his Brother, *Follow me, and I will make you Fishers of Men.* And the same Words he repeats to their Partners, *James* and *John* ; and they with *Peter* and *Andrew*, obey'd his Command, and left all and follow'd him ; and from that Time became his constant Disciples.

THIS is the plain Account of the Miracle ; and it affords us (without any Help
of

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of Fancy,) these two Particulars, which are worth our Regard, if not Admiration.

I. THAT upon our Saviour's Command, these Men should forsake all that they had, and follow our Saviour.

II. AND that our Saviour should think fit to make choice of such Persons, for his chief Followers, and constant Disciples.

I. FIRST, That upon our Saviour's Command, they should straight forsake and leave all that they had, to follow our Saviour. For it was not so much, or only the Miracle, that made them give themselves up to his Service, but his powerful Word. That mighty Command, which all Nature obeys; that Word, at which the whole World arose and followed, and has followed ever since the Creation. And though it was not very much they forsook, yet (like the Widow's Mite) it was all they had, even all their Living; their Trade and Employment, their Support and Subsistence, and by which they had gain'd, though a mean, perhaps, yet an honest Livelihood. And of this they could see no great Expectation

pectation in following our Saviour, who had neither any visible Estate, or any worldly Employment. He went about, indeed, doing Good, but not to himself, but only to others; and what might make them yet more unwilling to leave all, was their late good Success, the wonderous Draught of Fish they had taken. To have left all when they had been toiling, and labouring, and vexing all Night, and had taken nothing; to have left their Ships and Vessels when empty, had been no great Virtue; but to leave them so fully freighted and richly laden, was the greatest Instance of pure Submission and pure Obedience. For it is usually observed, that as Riches increase, so the Love of Riches, and the Desire increases. When Men have little, or scarce worth the having, and less worth the keeping, they can part with it easily: When Things go cross, and the World frowns upon them, they can frown, perhaps, on the World again; and either out of Anger and Discontent, or, perhaps, out of Pride and Revenge, can leave the World, and take to Religion: But when they thrive, and prosper, and flourish; when Things go well with them, and not only succeed according to Hope, but beyond Expectation; when the World smiles upon them,

and

and courts, and flatters, and follows, and pursues them, with Pleasure in her Left-Hand, and in her Right-Hand Riches and Honour ; they then find it difficult, and almost impossible to resist her Temptations : When she makes them such Offers, so great and so glorious, and begs (as for an Alms) to accept her rich Presents ; to turn away with Scorn and Disdain, to cast or fling her off, when she hangs upon them so closely and tenderly, were not only hard, but unkind and ungrateful. This is a Tryal that would shake and stagger the strongest and firmest human Resolution. This, as the Apostle speaks, *is the Victory even of Faith* ; and nothing can overcome this World, but the sure and certain Hopes of another. There is one Thing may serve yet farther to recommend the Faith of these Disciples, that without asking Questions, or making Enquiries, how they should live, *What they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed*, they followed our Saviour without any Delay : Not like those that are mentioned by our Evangelist in another Place, who, when our Saviour commanded them to follow him, made little Excuses ; and one would *go and bury his Father*, and, for ought we know, was buried with

his Father ; for we hear no more of him : And another would needs go, *and bid those Farewel, that were at his House, and take Leave of his Friends ;* and so took Leave of our Saviour, and bid him Farewel.

THAT one Saying of his, *The Foxes have Holes, and the Birds have Nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head,* was such a Discouragement, as hindered them from following our Saviour any longer, and made them repent, and, perhaps, think they had followed him too long already.

II. THE next Thing to be considered, is our Saviour's making choice of such Persons as these, for his constant Disciples. The Design he had in hand was certainly the greatest that ever was in the World, and the most difficult that was ever attempted ; no less than repealing and utterly abolishing all the Religion in the World, both *Jewish* and *Pagan* : And in all the World, one would hardly imagine he could have found out Persons so very unfit for so mighty an Enterprize. It was thought of old in antient History a bold Design in the young Prince

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Prince of *Macedon*, with a small Army, though all of them Veterans, to attempt the Conquest of the Empire of *Persia*. And in modern History, as bold an Undertaking of another Nation, with an handful of Men, to attempt the Conquest of *India*. But what are these, and all the Exploits, either of ancient or modern Heroes, to the conquering the World by a few Fishermen, and a very few more, of like Occupation? And not only the conquering, but reclaiming, and civilizing; the reforming the World, the suppressing and extirpating all their Lusts and Vices, as well as all their Religion: And it is hard to say of which Men are usually more fond and tenacious, of their Lusts and Passions, or their old Way of Worship and ancient Religion. One would think, since this was our Saviour's Design, he should rather have chosen his Disciples and Apostle's out of the Priests themselves, or the Doctors of their Law, or the Scribes and Pharisees: And he who could with one Word of Command, call *Levi*, as he was sitting at the Receipt of Custom, could as easily have call'd the High-Priest himself, even when he was sitting in the Chair of *Moses*, and made *Annas* and

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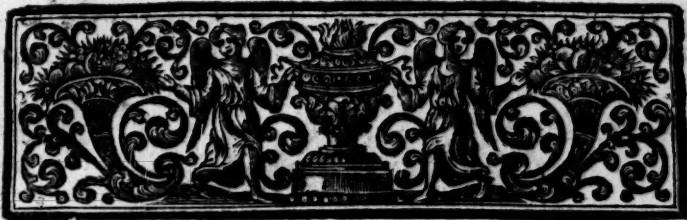
Caiaphas have follow'd him, as well as *Andrew* and *Peter*. And, perhaps too, even in human Policy, they would have followed him, had they thought or expected to be as great as *St. Peter's* Successors. But he whose Kingdom was not of this World, took none of these Methods : And though, instead of Ten thousand, with ten or twelve Men he went out to meet a King, that came against him with Twenty thousand, and all the Princes of the Earth, and the Prince of the Air, that were coming against him with innumerable Legions ; yet without either sending or receiving an Embassy, without desiring, or admitting, or harkening to Conditions of Peace, which he knew would never last or continue ; and that nothing could do but a perfect Conquest, and entire subduing of such a false, faithless, and potent Enemy : With this little Band he goes out to conquer, and doubts not, by the Grace of him that sent him, to return to him again with Honour and Victory. He already beheld Satan falling from Heaven, and losing his almost universal Monarchy. He chose not (as the Apostle speaks on the Occasion) either many wise Men, or many mighty, or many noble, but

but the foolish Things of the World, to confound the mighty, that none might glory or boast in his Presence, or come in for their Part, or rob him of any Share of his Victory. This Work was wholly the Work of God ; and the meaner the Persons he chose to employ, the less would be theirs, and the greater his Glory. And, among all the Arguments for the Christian Religion, there is not a stronger or more convincing, than that it was taught at first, and established all over the World by such poor Men as the twelve Apostles, and who are now, all over the World, more famous, than the twelve *Cæsars*, and much greater Conquerors ; and have nobler Trophies, and more lasting Monuments, (such as this in which we are now assembled,) erected every where to their pious, sacred, and blessed Memories.

AND may Almighty God, who gave such Grace to his Holy Apostles, that they readily obey'd the Calling of his Son Jesus Christ, and followed him without Delay, grant to us all, that we being called by his Holy Word, may give up
M 4 *our-*

ourselves obediently to fulfil his Holy Commandments ; through the same Jesus Christ : To whom with the Father, and the Blessed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.





SERMON X.

M A T T. viii. 27.

But the Men marvell'd, saying, What Manner of Man is this, that even the Winds and the Sea obey him?



THOUGH there be no Necessity of observing any great Order, or Method, in treating on the Miracles of our blessed Saviour; yet having lately discoursed on the wonderous Draught of Fishes, I shall proceed to another, which he wrought on the same Element. To shew the Son of Man had not only Dominion over the Fishes of the Sea, and whatsoever

ever walketh through the Paths of the Sea, but over the Sea itself; and to make us consider, and with the Disciples admire, *what Manner of Man* he was, whom *even the Winds and the Sea obey'd*.

IN treating on this Miracle, I shall first enlarge on the most material Passages; to each of which I shall add a few Inferences, and conclude the whole with some useful Application.

OUR Saviour having spent the Day in teaching and preaching to the People, as it grew towards Evening, thought fit with his Blessing to dismiss the Multitude; and intending to pass over the Sea of *Galilee*, to the other Side of the Country, he commanded his Disciples to get their Ship ready; and was no sooner entered, but leaving that to their Guidance and Management, he retired to the Hinder-part of it alone; and there, as we may reasonably and piously conceive, recommending himself to the Care and Protection of his Heavenly Father, he laid himself down in Peace and Quiet, and took his Rest, and fell asleep; as knowing his Father would keep him in Safety. Whether it were that our blessed Saviour design'd to try the Faith of his Disciples, or confirm it by another, and new sort of Miracle;

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Miracle ; or whether (as more probably) his natural Spirits being tired and wearied, and almost spent with the Duty and Service of the Day, his human Nature required, and stood in need of some Rest or Repose; for as the Body to the Soul is a Burthen or Encumbrance, and presses it down; the same, in some Measure, was the human Nature to our Saviour's Divinity.

It may be worth our while here to make some Reflections, and consider our blessed Saviour asleep.

IF (as *Solomon* says) *the Sleep of a labouring Man is sweet*, How sweet was the Sleep of the Holy Jesus? that had been working hard from Morning till Evening, and labouring all Day in his Father's Vineyard: With what Content? with what Satisfaction did he lay him down to relieve his Senses? to ease, and refresh, and recover his Spirits? With what Holy Dreams, with what Divine Extasies was his heavenly Soul entertained and transported? With Visions, like that of *Jacob's* Ladder, full of Angels ascending, and Angels descending: His Father at the Top on his Throne of Glory; and himself at the Foot, asleep on a Pillow: A Pillow that was fit, like that of *Jacob's*, to be made an Altar, and deserved

deserved to be consecrated. And who can sufficiently admire the Condescension of our great Lord and Saviour, that he should not only take upon him our Nature, but even our Infirmities? The Holy Angels, his Servants and Ministers, that waited on him continually, (and who wait on us too, by his Appointment,) are never weary'd or tired with their Ministry; and though incessantly employ'd, have no Want or Occasion of Rest or Refreshment: Like the great Keeper of *Israel*; *Neither slumber nor sleep*; and have not slumber'd or slept ever since the Creation. Happy Creatures! that from the Beginning have not let slip so much as a Minute; have lost no Time, not so much as one Moment, in the Service and Worship of their great Creator; have constantly paid him their Duty and Homage, without Cessation, and without Intermission: And to this Day are as ready and chearful, as active and wakeful, as the very first Moment. Happy Creatures! but unhappy they, who are forced to spend so great a Portion of their very short Life, and to lose so much of their Time in Sleep and perfect Inaction: And yet thus it is, and thus it will be, till we come to put off these mortal Bodies, and lay our Heads down in the Dust, there to sleep till the Heavens are no more; and then shall awake,
and

SERMON X. 173

and be like the Angels; shall never sleep, or be given to Slumber. And though we could here scarce watch with our Saviour so much as one Hour, we shall wake with him there; nor our Eyes be heavy to sleep one Moment during his Service, to all Eternity.

BUT I proceed. Whilst our Saviour lay asleep on a Pillow, in the Hinderside of the Ship, though at their launching forth, there does not appear any Sign of a Storm, but calm or fair Weather; there arose on the sudden such a violent Tempest, as the Ship was now almost covered with Waves, and in Danger of Sinking.

AND this too is often our Case and Condition: We set out and launch into the World in a calm Season, and fair Weather, and with a promising Gale; and flatter ourselves, with the Hopes of a pleasant and a prosperous Voyage; when all on the sudden, (like those in the Psalmist, that follow their Business in great Waters) a Storm arises, and lifts up the Waves, and we are carried almost as high as the Heavens in Hopes and Expectation, and down again as low as to the Deep, in Fear and Despair, and we reel and stagger like a drunken Man;

Man; are at our Wits End, and ready to perish: And unless we cry (like those in the Psalmist, or like these Disciples) to the Lord in our Trouble, there is none to deliver us out of our Distress: For as at his Word the stormy Wind arose; so alone at his Word too it ceases.

VARIOUS and different have been the Opinions of Learned Men, concerning the Occasion or Cause of this Storm, as our Lord was asleep: Whether it were only accidental and natural; or whether it were sent by God himself, or perhaps by our Saviour, to prove his Disciples, to exercise both their Belief, and their Patience; their Hope in him, and their Trust in God's Providence: Or, by a more surprizing and concerning Miracle, than that of changing Water into Wine, by turning on a sudden a Storm to a Calm, to manifest yet farther his Power and Glory, by a Miracle that was likely to make a more lasting Impression on their Minds, as mighty Dangers and wonderful Deliverances are apt to do, and can scarce be forgotten.

OR whether the Storm were neither accidental nor natural, nor sent from Heaven, but raised, perhaps, by the Prince of the Air, in Hopes of destroying whom he was
not

not able to seduce or betray with all his Temptations; in Hopes to defeat his great Design of saving lost Man, and prevent, if possible, the World's Redemption: Or, what is more likely, perceiving our Saviour was directing his Course towards the Country of the *Gadarens*, where he long had reign'd in full Power and Authority, and had exercised the utmost and cruellest Tyranny, to stop his Passage, and hinder his Progress, and to keep the War out of his own Dominions. For though it is said, that *when Satan had finished all his Temptations, he left our Saviour, and departed for a Season*; yet we cannot but think he watched all Opportunities to revenge his Defeat, and to compass, if possible, the Ruin of his mortal and immortal Enemy; and he who went about *like a roaring Lyon, seeking whom he might devour*, would be glad and proud of such a Prey, as the Lamb of God himself, that came to take away the Sins of the World; and what vexed him yet more, the Sins of all the World, excepting his own; and he and his were only excluded from Hopes of a Share in the common Salvation. And he might think there could be no Time so proper to work his Destruction, as when the innocent Lamb was fast asleep.

THESE

THESE might be the evil Spirit's Designs: And though God permitted him to raise the Tempest; yet he who set even Bounds to the Ocean, and said, *Here shall thy proud Waves be stay'd*; could stop his Rage, and check his Fury, and say to the proud Spirit himself, *Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther*. And this was far enough; too far, at least for the Faith of the Disciples, of which he had almost made Shipwreck; and too far even with respect to our Saviour, whom though he could not destroy, he was able to disturb, and spoil his Rest, which he so much wanted, and hinder his Sleep, and break his Repose.

WE may easily imagine, that at first the Disciples, who had been used to the Sea, and of a long Time accusom'd to Storms and Tempests, employ'd all their Skill, and Pains, and Industry, before they would presume to awaken our Saviour; and had tried all Ways, and used all Means possible to save both themselves, and especially their Lord and Master, from perishing. But when they had toiled, and labour'd in vain, and their Faith and their Strength began to fail, and the Danger increased; when all Hope of Safety was taken away, with lifted up Hands, and bended

bended Knees, and a lamentable Cry, (and there is not a more lamentable Cry in the World, than of Drowning Men in the Moment of Shipwreck,) they call on our Saviour to awake and arise, or they, and (they feared) himself, would instantly perish.

It is certain, if the Disciples had had either Time, or Leisure, or so much Command of their Reason, as to think or consider where they were, and who was with them, and what a certain Pledge they had of their Safety, they could not have feared being lost or cast away. It was not possible that Ship should miscarry, that bore a much greater Person than *Cæsar* and all his Fortunes, even Christ himself, and the whole World's Salvation. As well, or better, might the Ark of *Noah*, with the whole Race of Mankind, have been overwhelmed with the Deluge, or split, as it rested on the Mountains of *Ararat*. But Frights and Surprizes do little regard, and seldom attend to the Dictates of Reason: Men in a Storm, indeed are apt to fly to their Prayers and Devotions; but so scared with the present imminent Danger, they scarce think of the God, to whom they are praying. And though our Saviour

rebuked his Disciples, for their want of Faith, for their Fear and Doubting; yet is it no Wonder, that in such an Amazement, they thought not of him, and forgot their Security, though at the same Time they thought of him too, as their only Security. It is observable here, that the several Evangelists, who relate this Story, do make the Disciples use several Expressions, such as their Fear and Danger suggested: And some cry, *Lord save us, we perish!* And others, *Master, Master, we perish!* And others indecently, and with less Respect, *Master, carest thou not that we perish?* Like those in the Psalmist, *Up, Lord! why sleepest thou? Awake, and be not absent from us any longer! Why forgettest thou our Misery and Trouble? Awake, and be not absent from us for ever!*

WE read in the History of the Prophet *Jonas*, that when the Seamen and Passengers were in Danger of Shipwreck, they all called on the Gods whom they worshipped; as (suppose) *Neptune, Æolus*, or some of their other Sea Gods or Goddeses; and this in Heathens was pious and commendable. But we read in the History of some later Christians, that in a Storm, or
a Tem-

a Tempest, or in Danger of Shipwreck, instead of calling on the God whom they worship, do call (God help them ! but will he help them ?) some, on the Virgin *Mary*, (and can she help them ?) and some on St. *Barbara*, and some on St. *Nicholas*, and some on St. *Christopher*, to carry them (I suppose) over the Sea, as they tell us in their Legends, he carry'd our Saviour : As very a Fable, as the Poet's Legend of *Arion* carried on the Back of a Dolphin. But, what is yet worse, and much more prophane, they are taught in a Storm to throw the Host into the Sea ; and to cast our Saviour himself overboard, like the Prophet *Jonah*, to allay the Tempest : And without so much of the Fear and Piety of those poor Heathens, as to ask God Forgiveness. Now, had the *Jews* been bred to any such Superstition, or been taught to call on their Patriarchs or Prophets, or to pray to any of their Saints departed, how much more justly, might the Disciples have called on *Noah*, that was saved in an Ark of Wood, in the Deluge ? or their Prophet *Moses*, that was saved on the Waters in a little Ark of Reeds or Rushes ? and with much better Reason, have expected their Aid, than others

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the Assistance of their fabulous Saints, or even of the Virgin herself, whom we never find at Sea, and who was never (that we read of) so much as once, on the Waters? And I cannot imagine why they have call'd her *Stella Maris*, and have given her such Power over the Sea, unless for her Name, and the meer Sound of Words, *Maria*, and *Mare*. But instead of *Noah*, or the Prophet *Moses*, or *Jonah*, who was saved as strangely as either, and no less miraculously, the Disciples directly go to our Saviour, and teach us in our Dangers, and all our Distresses, to whom we should address our Prayers and Devotions.

It may be worth observing here, that though our blessed Saviour was not, and could not be ignorant of the Rising and Increasing of the Storm; yet he lets it prevail, till they were all in the utmost Danger of perishing. And this too is often the Method of God's Providence; to suffer Things to go to Decay, and almost to Ruin, before he will interpose: Should he appear at the very first Sight of a Calamity; we should hardly believe there was any Danger in the Case, or any need of his appearing. It is certainly

ly as great an Instance of his Goodness and his Power, and his Infinite Wisdom and Knowledge to prevent a Mischief ; and no doubt we have escaped in the Course of our Lives, a thousand Dangers, of which we knew nothing ; and have only a general, though not so affecting and grateful a Sense of his constant Protection : He gives his Angels Charge over us continually, to keep us in all our Ways, that we dash not our Foot at any Time against a Stone : But these Angels of his are yet more visible, if at any Time we chance to fall, and are raised again, and are not suffered to fall for ever, or be dash'd in Pieces. He can, if he please, whilst the Storm is arising, and the Clouds about us are gathering Blackness, either scatter the Clouds, or divert the Storm on the Heads of his Enemies ; but he lets it sometimes to fall on his People, and on them more severely : As here on the Disciples, who in all Probability were in more Peril than others that were in the same Storm, and in greater Distress. And this he does often ; and seldom shews himself, but, as the wise Man speaks, with respect to his Judgments, till the Case and the Danger is worthy of God, and requires his Presence,

sence, and deserves his Appearance. But I return to our Saviour, who being now awaken'd with the Crys of his Disciples, and rebuking them, first for their Weakness and Fearfulness, *arose, and rebuked the Winds and the Sea*, and said, *Peace, be still ! and there was a great Calm :* Not only the Winds were hush'd and quiet, but the Disciples Fears and Passions allay'd, and they were all struck with Silence, and profound Admiration. And *the Men marvelled*, and as soon as their Wonder would give them Utterance, they said among themselves, *What Manner of Man is this, whom even the Winds and the Seas obey ?* And well might they wonder. It is hard to say, which is the greater Miracle, to raise the Dead, or to lay a Storm, with a Word speaking. The Winds and the Seas are usually as Deaf, as those who are dead, and laid in the Grave, and are out of Hearing, and out of Remembrance. And what added yet to the Greatness of the Miracle, the Wind was not only laid in a Moment, but the Sea itself that was ruffled before, was smooth on a sudden, and all was calm and perfect Serenity : For, as is well known, and usually observed, by those who go down to the Sea in Ships, that
after

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after a Storm, though the Winds are over, yet the Waves of the Sea are still in Commotion, and still in Agitation: But here at the very first Word of our Saviour, the Winds in an Instant cease to blow, and the Billows to rise, and both Winds and Seas fulfil his Word, and obey his Command: For, though the Waves of the Sea are mighty; yet not only he who dwells so high, but he who dwells so low too, was mightier.

HAVING thus explain'd and enlarged on this Miracle, with the most material and remarkable Passages, I shall conclude all with some brief and useful Application. And, indeed, our Case is so like the Disciples, that the Miracle seems to apply itself to our present Condition.

AND what better Use can we make of the Miracle, than with the Men in the Text, and the other Disciples, to fear and tremble, stand amaz'd and astonish'd, and ask ourselves, *What Manner of Man* he was, whom *the Winds and the Seas obey'd*.

WHEN the Children of *Israel* were pass'd over in Safety, through the *Red-*
N 4
Sea,

Sea, it is said, *The People feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his Servant Moses.* And so should we, when we read and consider both this, and our Saviour's other great Miracles, fear the Lord, and believe God, and his Son Christ Jesus. And this was the End of all his Miracles; and had he not wrought such mighty Wonders, as never any Man wrought before, and those too attested, as well as possible Things of that Nature, and at such a Distance, can be attested, we had not had Sin: But now have we no Cloak for our Sin, or a Cloak at least so thin and thread-bare, it is seen through, and hides nothing but what it discovers, our Shame, or rather our Want of Shame, and barefac'd Infidelity.

It is possible, had some of the Scribes and Pharisees been present at this Storm, and beheld the Miracle, as they objected to our Saviour, *that he cast out Devils, by the Prince of the Devils*, they might have objected, that as the Storm, perhaps, was raised at first by the Prince of the Air; so by the Prince of the Air it was laid again. An Objection so absurd, as well as blasphemous, that neither God nor any Man would forgive.

BUT

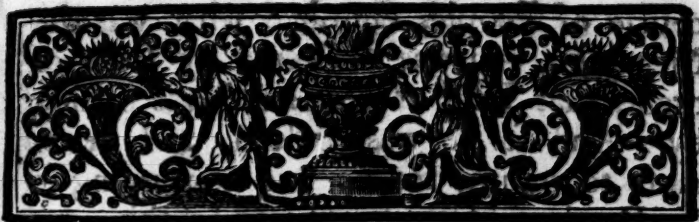
BUT it was not the End and Design of our Saviour's Miracles, to convince us of their own Truth and Reality, which even the Devils believ'd and confessed; but to convince us chiefly of the Truth of his Doctrine: For this they were wrought, and for this they were written, and the Memory of them preserved to Posterity; that all the World might know and believe that this was the Christ, or the Son of God, and God himself: And not only with the Men in the Text to marvel, but exceedingly fear and tremble to think, *what Manner of Man* he was, and what Manner of Men we ought to be, *in all Holy Conversation and Godliness! Looking for, and hastening to the Coming of our Lord and Saviour*, when he shall be revealed again in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance on those who did not believe, and who believed and did not obey the Gospel; who regarded not his Word and Command, whom *even the Wind and the Seas obey'd*.

TO

*T O him, therefore, with the Father,
and the blessed Spirit, be all Ho-
nour and Glory, Adoration and
Dominion, and Love, and Obe-
dience, now and for ever : And
the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the Love of God, and the Fel-
lowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us
all evermore. Amen.*



S E R M O N



SERMON XI.

LUKE xviii. 42, 43.

*And Jesus said unto him, receive thy Sight,
thy Faith hath saved thee.*

*And immediately he received his Sight,
and followed him, glorifying God : And
all the People, when they saw it, gave
Praise unto God.*



Our Saviour was now nigh
the City of *Fericho*, (but
whether entering or depart-
ing the City, though dis-
puted by some, who love
to be disputing, as it is not
very certain, so neither is it material,) a
poor Blind Man, that was called *Bartimeus*,
sat on the Highway begging : And hear-
ing on a sudden, a more than ordinary Con-
course

course of People, enquired what was the Meaning ; and was answered by some of them, that Jesus of *Nazareth* was passing by : And so he was, indeed, and never more to return, for he was now going to his Death and Crucifixion ; and if this poor Man had lost this Opportunity, he had never received his Sight, nor ever seen the blessed Jesus.

IT is very remarkable, if not a little wonderful, that though he was told only it was Jesus of *Nazareth* ; yet he does not call him Jesus of *Nazareth*, but *Jesus, thou Son of David, have Mercy on me !* And by giving him his proper and peculiar Title, he seems to have known him to be the *Messiah*.

IT looks here a little unkind in the People, and, perhaps, some of them our Saviour's Disciples, to rebuke this poor Man, and bid him be silent. Whether it be, as it is too often the Nature of Men that are in no Want themselves, not to be sensible of others Necessities ; or whether they thought the poor Man was troublesome, and with his Noise, and his Cries, disturb'd our Saviour ; and seeing he answer'd him not, would have him be quiet himself, and let our Saviour be quiet.

AND

AND yet they might have learned from his former Behaviour, on other like Occasions, that he was never offended with the Prayers of any in Need and Distress, or displeased with their earnest and repeated Importunities. When the poor Woman of *Syrophænicia*, intreated him to have Mercy on her Daughter that was tormented with an evil Spirit; and the Disciples desired him to send her away, because she cried after them; for that very Reason he would not send her away, till he had granted her Request, and told her the evil Spirit was gone out of her Daughter. So here this poor Man, though rebuked by the People, who had no Sense of his sad, and wretched Condition, or thinking, as he asked of all other Passengers, he begg'd only some common Alms or Charity; or, perhaps, out of pure Regard and Reverence to our blessed Saviour, whom they would not have so molested; or for what other Cause, rebuked by the People, and charg'd to be silent; yet he does not forbear, and not being able to know in what Part of so great a Multitude our Saviour was coming, whether he were now behind or before, or nearer or farther, least he should be out of Hearing, he cries so much the faster, and so much the louder, *Jesus,*
thou

thou Son of David, have Mercy on me !
We cannot but believe that our blessed Saviour, who saw *Nathaniel* while he was under the Fig-Tree, before he came to him, heard the very first Cry of this poor Man at a Distance ; but lets him cry on still for the Proof and the Tryal of his Hope and his Faith, to increase his Desire of the Mercy he craved, and improve his Esteem of the Blessing he wanted. And this is usually the Method of God himself, who though he knows our Wants before we ask, yet he makes sometimes, as though he heard not, and seldom grants at our very first asking. And thus too our Saviour, though he heard the Cry, and knew the Necessity of this poor Man ; yet he still goes forward, and takes no Notice, and seems to mind him no more than the rest of the People. And though he does not reprove him, indeed, yet was his very Silence, a kind of Rebuke. But having at length sufficiently try'd both his Faith, and his Patience, he commands him to be brought ; and though he very well knew what he wanted, and the very Sight of the Man might easily tell him what he desired, yet he kindly asks him what he would have ; and by his kind Question he seems already to promise, and before-hand to grant his Request : *Lord, says he, that I*
may

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may receive my Sight : And Jesus said to him, receive thy Sight ; and he received it immediately : A mighty Blessing ! tho' long desired, yet it came in an Instant.

IT is very observable, that our blessed Saviour who takes all Occasions of giving the Glory of his Actions to God, or even rather to Men than himself ; when he bids the poor Man receive his Sight, he adds, *Thy Faith hath saved thee*, or made thee whole. As though it were not so much his Power, as his own Faith that wrought the Miracle : An Instance both of Greatness of Mind, and Humility ; and we may ever observe, that no Persons are of so noble a Spirit, as those who are truly modest and humble. And, sure, if our blessed Saviour himself thought fit to give God all the Glory of his Actions, it may well become his poor Servants and Disciples to give him, if he will take it, to give him, if he will pardon it, the Glory of theirs, which yet is no Glory, unless it be covered and veil'd with his Glory.

HAVING thus consider'd the Miracle itself I should now proceed to the Effect of the Miracle, which it had, both on the poor Blind Man and the People : Of him
it

it is said, that he followed our Saviour, *glorifying God*; and of the People, that *when they saw it, they gave Praise unto God.*

BUT this deservng a full Discourse, I shall choose to defer it till another Opportunity, and spend the Remainder of this, in some peculiar and useful Reflections.

OUR Saviour, as appears by the Holy Gospel, wrought several Miracles of this Nature, and cured many that were blind; some that were possibly blind by Accident, and some that were blind from their Birth; and it is hard to determine which was the greater Blessing or Happiness, for a Man to receive his Sight again, when for a long Time (perhaps for many Years) he had been dark and blind, and knew the Blessing of Sight, and knew, too, the Want of so great an Happiness; or, for a Man that had never seen before, to see on a sudden. If any Difference, the first were perhaps more glad and joyful, and the other more amaz'd and astonish'd; but both, to be sure, exceedingly thankful. And the first Use they made of their Eyes, was (sure) to cast them up to Heaven, and thank God for his Mercy. But because our Saviour is said more often

often to have healed those that were born blind, I shall choose to make the Remarks and Reflections I design on this Subject, on his healing or giving Sight to such Persons, both as the greater, and the frequenter Miracle.

AND, First, I shall consider the sad Misfortune of a Man born blind; and though a Misfortune that happens to few, yet if God permitted, what happens to few, might happen to many: And no Man can behold such an Object, without thinking with himself, it is God's Mercy it is not his own Condition. And a sad one it is, and a dismal Condition, for a Man to sit all his Days in Darkness, and no Days to him; to live all his Life in the Shadow of Death, as sad and dismal as Death itself, even past his Friend's very last kind Office of closing his Eyes, that are clos'd already. A grievous Estate! and what makes it more grievous, for a Man to be thus unhappy in an Age of little Faith, and no Miracles, and without Hopes of any Relief. Had he been born in the Time of our Saviour, or in the Time of the Apostles, or even of the primitive Christians, he might have met with a Cure: But now he must follow the Generation of his Fathers, and never see Light,

no more than they in their Graves and Sepulchres. It is as hard for us to conceive the Misery of one born blind, as for him to conceive the Blessing of those who enjoy their Sight, or to have any Notion, or Sense of their Happiness. What is the Sun, and the Moon, and the Stars to him? and the Heavens, and all their Glory? To him, alas! the whole Heavens are darken'd, and the Moon and the Sun in a total Eclipse; the Stars are fallen, and give no Light; and the World itself is to him still a Chaos, and all is Confusion, and all unintelligible.

BUT if the Misery of such a Condition be great and inconceivable, how much more inconceivable is the Joy of a Man in such a Condition, at receiving his Sight? how infinitely greater his Joy and Happiness? How was this *Bartimeus*, that sat begging here by the Walls of *Jericho*, or the other poor Man, that sat at the Gate of the Temple in *Jerusalem*? how were they dazzled at the first and sudden Appearance of Light, that when their Eyes were open'd, came flashing upon them as quick as Lightning! But that the Works of God are compleat, that they were not struck blind again, was almost a Miracle. How must such a Man be surpriz'd, that
never

never saw any Thing, to behold all Things in an Instant ! to see the World in a Moment of Time, and with all its true and real Glories ! How must he needs look upwards, and downwards, and around with Wonder ! To behold the Skies, and the height of the Heavens, and their vast Extent, and the Sun in the Midst so bright and shining ! And when Night is come, to be still entertain'd with new, and more, and with as great, if not, too, with greater Wonders ; so many Thousand and Thousand of Stars in the Firmament : To look about him, and behold so many fair and goodly Creatures, all like himself, and hard to say whether he looks on them, or they on him with greater Wonder : To cast his Eyes downwards, (if he can keep them so long from looking upwards to God in Gratitude,) and to behold the beautiful Face of the Earth, the Trees and Herbs, and Plants and Flowers ; he must needs be no less amaz'd and astonish'd, than had he been made, and lived before the Creation. He cannot but say, that all is good, and very good, and God is better, and better to him, than to all he can see, which God has created.

BUT though the Misery of the one be greater, and the Joy of the other be more

transporting; yet is not this Blessing, tho' never so common, though never so frequent, and almost universal, a less, but a greater Object of Gratitude. For though it be true, *There is more Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth*, yet is it better still to need no Repentance. As much better as the Estate of the Angels is happier, and to be preferred before the most penitent Sinners.

It is a very strange and unworthy Abuse we make of God's Blessings, (and yet as common as the Blessings themselves,) to have little Regard, and hardly to value his Benefits, because they are general, because we share them in common with others; and his Gifts and Favours, like the Sun, arise, and like the Rain, descend on all Mankind. And of all his Benefits, as none is more usual and common than Sight, so none is more valuable. *Truly*, says the wise Man, *the Light is sweet, and a pleasant Thing it is to behold the Sun*. So sweet, and so pleasant, that all Things without it under the Sun were not worth the enjoying; but *all is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*. And yet even this inestimable Blessing, as all our other worldly Felicities, has many Allays, and
is

is attended with Grief, and Sorrow, and Misery : And not only to those who want the Benefit, but to those who enjoy it, to those who behold all Things under the Sun, *All is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* They are ready to turn their Eyes away, or close them, rather than behold so much Vanity.

It was very well answer'd by the pious old *Maris*, the good Bishop of *Calcedon*, who, when *Julian* the Apostate, derided and upbraided his Want of Sight, and blasphemously told him, *That his Galilæan God*, as he still call'd our Saviour (who is God blessed for ever) *could not heal his Blindness.* I thank God, says he, *for the Loss of my Sight, that I cannot behold so wicked a Tyrant :* And yet many such do Men daily behold, and are not suffered to call, or think them either wicked, or Tyrants ; and though they are Briars and Thorns in their Eyes, yet out of a servil and abject Spirit, they are taught to flatter, and praise, and behold them with Admiration, and pay them Honours next to Idolatry : Such Honours as, would the good primitive Christians have paid the Apostate, they had never been persecuted, But though we are so happy as not to behold (and may we never behold) their

Faces, yet we and all the World do daily behold the Effects of their Tyranny. It were almost enough to make us contented with the Loss of Sight, like the good old *Maris*, rather than to look abroad, and behold such a dismal, such a dreadful Scene of Mischiefe and Misery. The pitious Ruins, the vast Desolations of Kingdoms, and Countries, and the Fields that before stood so thick with Corn, as to laugh and sing, all weeping and sighing with the Blood and the Groans of their murdered Inhabitants, whose Blood, Day and Night too, cries aloud to Man for Pity, and to Heaven for Vengeance.

BUT besides these dismal and dreadful Spectacles, there are many others, though not in Appearance so terrible, yet as grievous still to consider, and which, if we could, we would gladly avoid ; but there is no avoiding ; and which Way soever we turn our Eyes, we meet them continually ; like Atoms in the Sun, they fly all about, and swarm around us as thick and innumerable.

To see Men, indeed, destroy one another is a pitious Sight ; but it is yet more lamentable to see them lay violent Hands

on

on themselves, and destroy both Bodies and Souls for ever. And, I doubt, there are many more, that have perished this Way, than either by Slaughters or Massacres; and the Face of Hell, like a Field of Battle, is cover'd all over with these Wretches, that lifted themselves in the Service of Sin, and took daily Pay of the Prince of this World, and very poor Pay, and died to support and enlarge his Dominions. The Sight of so much Sin and Folly, of Pride and Vanity, of Lewdness and Debauchery, of Strife and Envy, and all Kind of Impiety, might make a Man, of any Pity or Compassion, to wish, with the Prophet, That his *Head were Waters, and his Eyes were Fountains, or Rivers, of Tears, that he might weep Day and Night for the Slain of the People*: That he had a Place in the Wilderness with way-faring Men, that his righteous Soul might not be vexed with their Conversation, and daily grieved with seeing the unlawful Deeds of the Wicked. And there is not a more amazing Instance of God's Patience and Mercy, than, that he who is of purer Eyes to behold, can behold, and forbear to punish and destroy such a World of Iniquity.

ONE would hardly think there could be any worse Office our Eyes can do us ; and yet they do us worse Offices every Day, and greater Unkindnesses : It is not only that out of these Windows, as the wise Man calls them, we behold so much Evil ; but in at these Windows there enters so much Sin, and Folly, and Vanity.

It was a barbarous Custom, of the Eastern Princes to put out the Eyes of their younger Brothers, to prevent their Ambition, and make them incapable of succeeding, or ever enjoying the Empire : Whether they thought they would then be unable to govern, or refused for such a Deformity ; or whether they thought it a Shame and Disgrace for such a Person to govern those Nations, that could not behold the God whom they worshipped. And yet even this barbarous and inhuman Custom has prevailed among Christians ; and some very jealous and cruel Emperors have, not only put out the Eyes of their Rivals, but what is more strange, (as though that were not enough,) have had them shaven and shorn, and thrust into Monasteries : And what need

need all this ado, and Cruelty, to preserve a Man from falling into a thousand Snares and Temptations? Even in this sad and wretched Condition they were happier than most of the reigning Emperors, not only as obliged to spend their Time in Prayer and Devotion; *in seeking after the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*; and where they should never be accused of aspiring, or thought too ambitious, but as freed and delivered from all those Dangers to which they were exposed, that used them so cruelly: They seemed in the Sight of the World to perish, and die, and their End to be without Honour; but they were numbered with the Children of God, and their Lot was among the Saints: For the poor good Monks were Saints in those Days, and no Politicians. They lived retired, and were perfect Recluses, nor govern'd the World they had truly renounced. With these good Men they passed their Hours in Self-Denial, and Mortification, and ended their Lives in all the severest Acts of Religion; and were happier too in their coarse Fare, and their rough Weeds, and their hairy Garments, and a leathern Girdle about their Loins, than those who were cloath-
ed

ed in soft Raiment, and fared delicately; and lived in Kings Houses : Happier far in their Cells and Cloisters, than the Kings themselves in their Courts and Palaces, who might justly wish, and heartily wished, when they came to die, that this had been their Lot and Condition : They had never indulged their wanton Looks, and lustful Eyes, and made a Prey of all they beheld to their lawless Power, and lawless Pleasure ; and which cost many of them their Lives and Empires. Nay, one of the best that ever reigned, even the *Man after God's own Heart*, fell into the Snare ; and though it cost not his Crown, yet it cost him a thousand Tears of Repentance : And he wept Day and Night, and punished those Eyes that had drawn him into so great an Iniquity. But this, alas ! is a common Unhappiness ; and not only those who have Strength and Power, but those who have none, are often as guilty. And if, as our Saviour says, *whoever looks on another's Beauty, to lust after it, hath committed Adultery*, the Land, I fear, as the Prophet speaks, and the whole Earth is full of Adulterers.

How

How much need, then, have all People, as *Job* resolved, to make a Covenant, a chaste, a strict, and an holy Covenant with their Eyes, that they wander not after Vanity, especially too, if with him we believe (as I hope we do all believe and expect) that after Worms have destroy'd this Flesh, yet in this Flesh we shall see God ; and with these Eyes at the Last Day, when he stands upon the Earth, shall see our Redeemer. And though St. *John* tells us, that *when he comes in the Clouds, every Eye shall see him*, even those that pierced him ; yet none shall see him with Joy and Comfort, but those who feared, and those who obey'd, and those who served him, and loved his Appearance. And from that happy and glorious Appearance, shall pass to another, the Beatifick Vision, an Appearance yet more happy and Glorious.

LET us all therefore, as the Apostle advises, set our Affections on Things above ; and let us not look on the Things that are seen, but the Things that are not seen : For the Things that are seen are little and temporal, but the Things that

that are not seen, are great and eternal.

NOW to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.



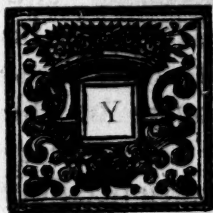
SERMON



SERMON XII.

MARK vii. 37.

He hath done all Things well : He maketh both the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak.



YOU may possibly remember, that I have proposed to treat on some of our Saviour's Miracles ;

AND having lately discoursed on his giving Sight to the Blind, I shall proceed to these, as much of the same Nature, his making *the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak.*

AND

AND in these I shall observe, too, much the same Method ; and shall first consider the Misfortune or Misery of those who want, and the Happiness of those who enjoy these Senses. And I shall take them in Order, and begin with Hearing.

It is a well known Question, and not easy to be decided, whether the Want of Hearing or Seeing, be the greater Misfortune ; for a Man to live always in Silence or Darkness ? They are certainly both of them very grievous Calamities : And, were it to be decided by the Persons concerned, it is not unlikely, but those who want either, would think that which they want to be the greater Affliction. Yet, if they could be persuaded, it were better and wiser to believe the quite contrary ; to be thankful to God, and submit to his Pleasure, and think what they enjoy to be the greater Felicity. But I mean not to enter into this endless Dispute, and more needless Comparison.

THE Case of those who are born blind I have already considered ; and shall now consider the Case of those who are born deaf. A Case, indeed, as rare as the other, and which happens but seldom ; and yet,
were

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were it not for the Goodness of God, what happens to some, might happen to others ; and what befalls but a few, might befall more, or many ; and we can never well behold such Objects without a Sense of Pity, and thanking God Almighty that we are not the Objects of others Compassion.

THOUGH God has given these outward Senses to all his Creatures, and to some, perhaps, in a greater Degree ; yet he has given them to Man for greater Ends, and more excellent Purposes. For having designed him a sociable Creature, without the Sense of Hearing, he would still be alone, more sad and melancholy, and worse than alone in the Midst of Society ; would neither be delighted or exhilarated with pleasant, facetious, and ingenious ; nor improved by wise and grave, and serious, nor instructed by learned, nor moved by eloquent, nor edified by pious and religious Discourses.

To observe Men smiling, and seem pleased and well satisfied ; to observe Men weeping, and look sad and disconsolate ; and he knows not for what, and cannot imagine what raises such strange and different Passions ; and would be glad to
par-

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partake not only of their Mirth and Joy, but their Grief and Sorrow : He will be apt to think, that he is the Subject, if not of their Mirth, yet at least of their Pity.

IT is a common Remark that such kind of Persons are usually jealous ; and it seems almost as rude and unkind to talk in their Presence, as to whisper in Company. Both they who cannot, and they who must not hear what is said, will soon doubt or suspect the Discourse is on them ; on some of their Faults, or some of their Imperfections : Or if they have more Charity or more Generosity, and a better Opinion of themselves and of others ; and knowing they do not deserve, are not afraid of any unhandsome Reflections ; yet it is a State very sad and uncomfortable, to be in a Manner deprived, excluded, and thrust out of all Conversation. Will they, can they be so good, or good natured, as never to envy at others Felicity ? never in the least to repine against Providence ? never to deplore, or bewail, or regret their own wretched Condition ? That they of a thousand, and, perhaps, of ten thousand, should be the only Persons to be punished, like *Cain*, (and perhaps too
only

only for the Sin of *Adam*,) and forced to wander like Exiles and Fugitives, not only driven from the Face of Men, but they fear too from the Face of God Almighty ; cast out of his Presence, and left out of his ordinary Care and Providence : Like the proud King of *Babylon*, banished out of all human Society, and fit only to herd and live with brute Creatures. It were enough to make them even for Refuge to fly to the Woods, and haste to the Deserts, and there to live, rather like Hermits and Anchorets. But besides the Comfort of common Conversation, and human Discourse, there is another Happiness, indeed, though not so necessary to human Life ; yet to many as pleasant, and very entertaining, and very delightful. *Can I*, said the good old *Barzillai* to *David*, when invited to Court, *can I hear the Voices of Singing Men, or of Singing Women ?* Alas ! he now could neither take any Pleasure in the Musick of the Court, or in that of the Tabernacle.

THE Psalms of *David*, which himself had composed, for the Service of the Sanctuary, and were either set by himself, or were set by *Asaph*, his chief Musician, when sung by the Levites and Priests in their Courses to the Harp, and the Lute,

and the well-tun'd Cymbals, with the Singers before, and the Minstrels after, and the Damsels in the Midst playing with their Timbrels, was all to him but a dumb Shew, and a silent Proceſſion. And he could now never hope, till he came to Heaven, any more to hear ſuch divine Muſick and Harmony. And as the Want or the Loſs of Hearing, ſo that of Speech too, is very ſad, and grievous, and afflict- ing ; and the more ſo, becauſe we cannot tell our Grievs and Afflictions, but muſt keep them to ourſelves, and ſtifle our Re- ſentments, and ſmother our Paſſions, till our Hearts are ready to burſt and break with our Sorrows. It is a common Opi- nion, that Mankind is no leſs diſtinguiſhed from Beaſts by this Power and Faculty, and exalted above them by Speech, than by Reaſon.

HOWEVER it is certain, that without this Property our Underſtanding would ſigni- fy little, and our Reaſon itſelf be of no Uſe or Service ; and inſtead of a Benefit, would be rather a Trouble, and a grievous Vexation. To have Thoughts in our Mind which we cannot declare ; to have No- tions we cannot impart or diſcover, we had as good almoſt, and more for our Quiet, to have

have never at all any Thoughts or Notions.

AMONG other Judgments, which in Case of Disobedience, God denounced by *Moses*, and repeated by his Prophets against the People of *Israel*, it is very remarkable that he threatens to bring among them a Nation of a strange Language; or to carry them captive into a foreign Country, among a strange People whose Language they knew not, and could not understand. And it is certainly one of the saddest Circumstances, and heaviest Aggravation of Conquest or Slavery, to be subdued by a People of a strange Language; or whose only Language is Stripes and Blows, and Wrongs, and Injuries; or to be led away Captive into foreign Countries, where our Speech is not known, nor our Cries and Voices heard in their Streets; and we are to them, and they are to us, more than Barbarians. And such wretched Creatures are the Deaf and Speechless; and among their Friends, and Kinsfolk, and Acquaintance, and even at Home, and in their own Land are Exiles and Fugitives. I confess, indeed, as was acknowledged before to the Praise of God, and his great and good Providence, that this Misfortune of being Deaf and Dumb is rare and extraordinary:

But though the Rarity of such a Misfortune be a greater Affliction; and a Grief to those who are so unfortunate; yet is not the contrary Blessing either less, or less valuable for being so general, so almost universal. It is rather a greater Object of Gratitude, because we share it in common with others; and they with us, and we with them, do all partake of the same Blessing and Happiness. But, alas! even these, as all other Blessings, have their Al-
lays, and are often attended with great Infelicities. And many might wish they had rather been born with a deaf and dumb Spirit, than to have been possessed with a worse Evil Spirit both of Hearing and Speaking.

FOR to instance a little in some ill Effects of both these Faculties, which we cannot live comfortably without, and with them we cannot live innocently; our Saviour has given us two very good Cautions, and very hard to be observed, *Take heed how you hear; and take heed what you hear.* The first, indeed, is much in our Power, as depending on our inward Affections and Dispositions, our Readiness to attend, our Willingness to give heed to the Things that are spoken. But in the other we are not left to our own Choice and Liberty:
And

And though we desire, and would be glad to hear nothing but what is good, yet we hear, and are forced to hear a great deal of Evil. With what a World of idle Impertinences, and frivolous Stories, are we daily, and hourly, and continually assaulted? It is strange what Delight Men can take, or what Pleasure in having their Ears and their Heads fill'd with other Folks Matters; and those others with theirs: All of them careful and wondrous busy about one another, and scarce any minding their own Concerns. He that knows what to do with himself, will not, and cannot have much to do with others; will never be listening or enquiring into their Affairs. A wise Man would not be troubled with the Knowledge of all his Neighbour's Designs; nay, though it were possible, and he might, or could, he would not be omniscient; a Quality which some of the antient Philosophers denied even to God, as inconsistent with his perfect Felicity; but I am sure inconsistent in a far inferior, and a much less Degree, with any Mortal Man's Happiness. But besides these little and vain empty Trifles with which we are often every where entertain'd, and cannot avoid, unless we resolve never almost to come into Company, there are others with which too we are often en-

tertain'd, or not entertain'd, but tormented and persecuted. With what a World of Slanders and Calumnies, where ever we go, are we met and accosted ? with some ill-natured Story in every Place, and in every Company, are kindly welcom'd, and in a Manner saluted ? And with what Delight what strange Satisfaction do we draw near and hearken, and devour with Greediness, and with both Ears, and with all our Hearts attend and listen to such Evil Reports ? especially if they chance to be against Persons for whom we have no Kindness, or to whom we are prejudiced ? And in this, I fear, we are all of us mortal ; and such true Men, as we are hardly true Christians : If we were, we should rather be troubled and sorry to hear even Ill of our very worst Enemies ; and should be glad to hear, and more glad to receive the good News of their being reformed and amended : Be better pleased with the welcome Tydings of their good Deeds and Actions, than their little Faults, or their grievous Miscarriages. But in this, alas ! we act the quite contrary ; and our Ears are open to the Cries and Clamours that are raised against them ; but are deaf on both Sides, to all their good Qualities, and what we know to be their just Commendation. Or if we hear of their good
Report,

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Report, it is yet so coldly, we are hardly convinced ; and, like many an honest and pious Discourse that comes from this Place, it makes little Impression, and goes in at one Ear, and goes out at the other. After all we are told, we still either retain, or soon return to the same ill Opinion.

BUT besides these little and idle Imper-
tinencies, and spiteful Slanders, and ma-
licious Calumnies, there is yet another sort
of Discourse to which our Ears are as open,
and that is Flattery. And 'tis hard to say
whether Men are more pleased to hear well
of themselves, or to hear ill of others; nay,
many who scorn and despise Calumny, and
abhor slander, are hardly Proof against
Praise and Flattery; which, though a kind
of more civil and genteel, is oftentimes as
real Slander and Calumny. One would
think the Great were above it, and the
Mean were incapable of this Vice or Fol-
ly; and yet it extends and reaches even
from the highest to the lowest: Like the
sweet precious Ointment on the Head of
Aaron, that went down to his Beard, and
the Skirts of his Cloathing. No Odour
in the World so sweet and refreshing, so
reviving our Senses, or so pleasant, as Flat-
tery. It has something in it of the Na-
ture of *Manna*, and is strangely agreeable

P 4 and

and grateful to every Man's Taste and Palate. The poorest, the meanest, the littlest Creature, that deserves (if not to be scorn'd) to be pity'd and despised too for this, yet loves to be flattered; and though never so worthless, shall meet with some Spirits as mean as himself, that shall be ready to give him this Satisfaction. But as *Praise* (as the wise Man says) *is not seemly in the Mouth*, so neither in the *Ear of a Fool, that has no Understanding*. It does him no good, and a great deal of Mischief, and makes him conceive better Thoughts of himself than he knows he deserves.

BUT if the Vulgar, and the Meanest of the People are so fond and desirous, and proud to be flattered; how wretched is the State, how unhappy the Condition of the Rich and Wealthy, the Great and Powerful? how dangerous their Case, and how much to be pity'd, that hardly hear any Thing else but Flattery? If it creeps into Houses, and finds Entertainment in poor little Cottages, it governs and triumphs in Courts and Palaces; and rules all about: And in the Words of the Prophet, *It says to the Seers, see not; and to the Prophets prophesy not right Things*, but only smooth Things, and prophecy Deceits. We are apt to envy, and too apt to censure; but
should

should rather commiserate, and endeavour (if possible) to excuse the Mistakes and Faults of great Personages. It is a Wonder, if ever they hear the Truth ; and a greater Wonder, if those who tell them the Truth are not counted their Enemies. Their Friends are kept off by a Croud of Sycophants, by a Guard of little whispering Parasites ; that are ever instilling the worst of Poison into their Ears ; that shoots, and rages, and tears their Heads, and turns their Brains, and makes them dilirious, and fancy themselves to be wonderful Persons. Such is the Force and Power of Flattery, it can make a little Man a Prince, and a Prince a Monarch ; and a Monarch with one Foot in the Grave, too, immortal.

BUT, besides all these, there is yet another, and a worse Kind of Slander and Blasphemy ; and enough (to use the Scripture Expression) to *make the Ears of those who hear it to tingle* ; and yet so common, it is well nigh impossible to pass on our Way without being almost deafen'd and stunn'd with Oaths and Curses, with the most strange, and bold, and horrid Execrations ; and especially if they chance to be in the Hearing of Persons of a sacred Profession and Character, then they choose
to

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to be louder and fiercer, as though, if God did not hear or regard, they would have them tell him, and be as Ear-Witnesses of all their ungodly Speeches and Blasphemies. Now as to these, and other like Cases, our best Way is, among our Inferiours, and where we have Power, to rebuke with Authority ; and among our Superiours, and where we have none, to shew our dislike by a tacit Rebuke, and by turning away our Ears to all such kind of Discourses. But though we cannot Bridle other Mens Tongues, we may yet hold our own ; and take heed to offend, as we ourselves would not be offended. To the Hearing of Evil we are often exposed, and can hardly escape : But the speaking of Evil, though almost as hard, is not yet unavoidable. And yet (God knows, and God too forgive !) we are as much or more to blame in this kind than the other : How much Time, and how much Breath (and both of them precious, and both irrecoverable) do we spend in little idle Impertinencies ? in trifling Stories, which yet, if they have not something in them of Reflection or Censure, are yet more insipid, and more impertinent ? But this Condition so essential and necessary, is seldom omitted : It is the Salt that seasons almost all our Discourses ; but a Salt of so little,

or

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or of so ill a Savour with wise and good Men, it is fitter to be trod under Foot, or thrown on a Dunghil. Now,

ONE would think, that Persons addicted to Censuring and Slandering should hardly be guilty of Flattery ; and yet most of any ; and both proceed from the same Disposition. And *David*, who knew them both, and had felt their Effects, has put them together, and has join'd the Flatterers with Busy-Mockers and Revilers ; and they are scarce ever assunder. Both of a mean, and an abject Spirit, servile and slavish ; and both, like Prisoners, bound with one and the same Chain together. Disparaging Persons of known and great Excellencies, extolling others of no Worth or Value ; and often too both against their own Conscience : Were Men denied and debarr'd these Topicks of common Discourse, (and they are debarred and denied them by all the Rules of Religion,) we should often see the most talkative People, the most fluent and eloquent, all hush'd on a sudden, and as silent as Statues : And unless they could find some other more useful and harmless Discourse, it were better they were all Statues and Images ; like a Place adorn'd with Paintings and Sculptures,

tures, they would be more diverting and more entertaining.

BUT besides the Mischiefs that Men do one another by abusing this Faculty, there is yet a far greater. Their Words not only go through the World, but they stretch forth their Mouths unto Heaven; and their Talking is often against the most high: Making bold with his Name, or denying his Being, or disputing his Providence, reviling his Management, and censuring even his human and divine Ministration.

It were endless to reckon up the manifold Abuses of this excellent Faculty: Some not fit to be mentioned, or so much as once named, or even so much as once intimated. A sort (to say no more) of very foolish Discourse; and though by some Men affected, yet more fit and proper to the Beasts that perish, who in this Way, perhaps, would equal Mankind; and could they but speak would talk as well, and as wittily.

BEFORE I conclude, I shall briefly take notice of one Thing remarkable; and that is, the different Behaviour of the People

People and the Scribes and Pharisees, upon this and our Saviour's other like Miracles. The People, they marvelled, and were justly astonished, and said, and declared, *He had done all Things well*: But the Scribes and Pharisees imputed his Miracles to the Power of Satan: As though the Evil Spirit he had cast out of others, had entered, I had almost said into the Herd of the Scribes and Pharisees. But our Saviour refutes them with this very plain Instance; *Every Kingdom divided against itself, is brought to Desolation*. An Instance, on which I cannot enlarge without Fear and Trembling.

Now the Use we should make of both these Faculties, of Hearing and Speaking, is plainly the End or the Use to which they are both designed. To love and delight in hearing and speaking such Things, as may profit and edify one another: And to love and delight in hearing and shewing forth the Praises of God, his Power and Greatness, his Goodness and Mercy, which tend to his Honour and Glory, and no less to our Edification. When we once come to Heaven, (if we be ever so happy,

py, as I hope we shall be so happy, as once to come thither,) we shall then have both these Powers and Faculties thus ever employ'd in a kind, friendly, and divine Conversation, with Saints and Angels, in mutual Rejoicing, in hearty congratulating each others Happiness ; in hearing them sing to the Honour and Glory, in joining with them, to the Honour and Glory of him who sits on the Throne ; in hearing and singing his Praise to Eternity.

TO which happy Place, God of his infinite Mercy bring us all : And the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with us evermore.

The End of the First Volume.

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